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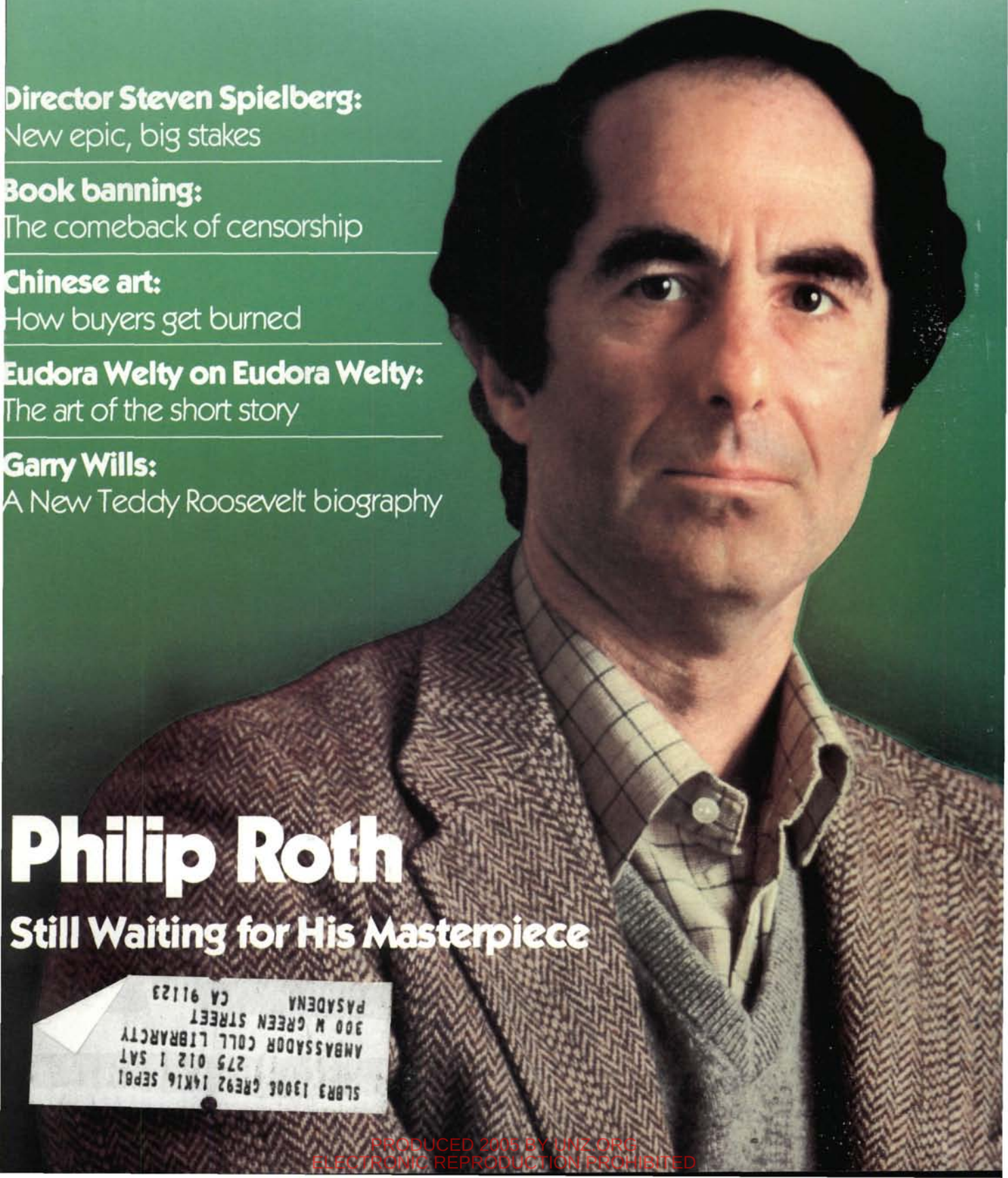

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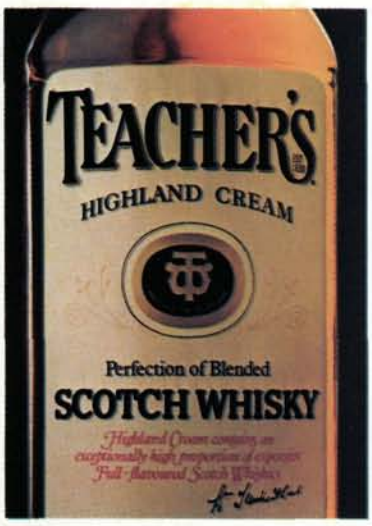

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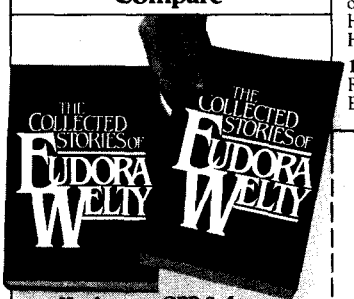

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(Saturday Review; January 21, 1978)

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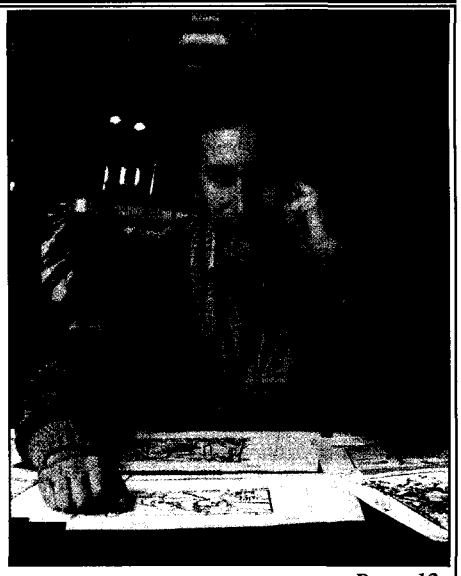

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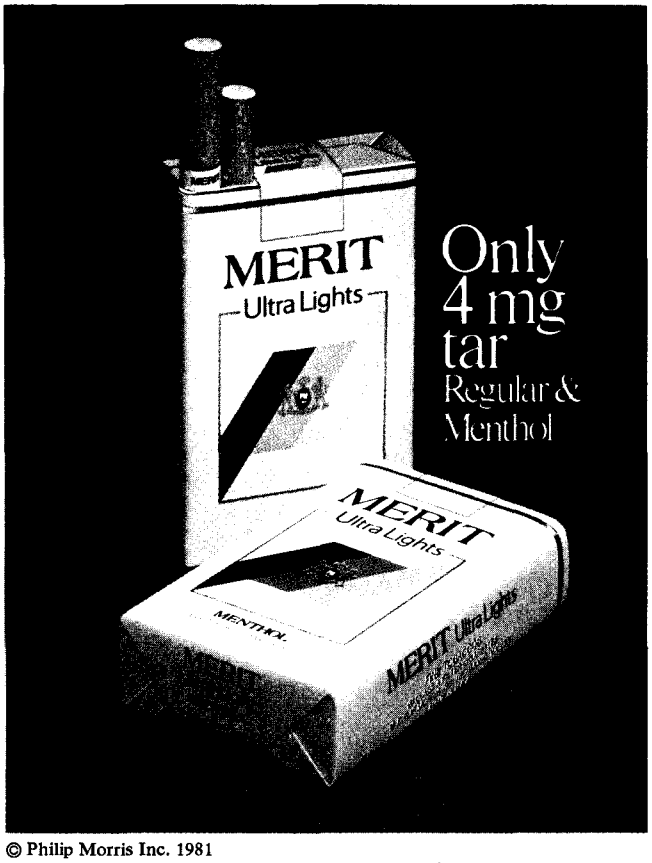

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Chic Art

I'd like to congratulate Carter Ratcliff on his article "The 'Art' of Chic" [April]. It was the best analysis of the art market and its "major" artists that I've read in the last 10 years. It amazed me to hear one voice among the ever-applauding critics with its own opinion. Thank you, on behalf of all the artists who are not in the "right" circles of the New York art world.

Benno Schmidbaur
Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

Though the Blue-Chip Dozen may be the present stars of the modern-art market, I wonder what their art will be worth 50 years from now when the "chic" glitz has worn off. As soon as people tire of looking at Brillo boxes and monochromatic fields, the bottom will surely drop out of this so-called art market.

Wendy F. Lawrence
Washington, D.C.

Tom Wolfe

I have been a fan of Tom Wolfe's for years and was delighted to read Joshua Gilder's interview with him [Creators on Creating, April]. Though the "chic" artists seem to have survived his blasting in *The Painted Word*, I'm sure millions of readers are grateful to Wolfe for making it respectable to know what you *don't* like. But paintings, at least, you can ignore—buildings, we have to live with every day of our lives. *Under the I-Beams* cannot come out too soon.

Jager Dihlous
Los Angeles, California

Weasel Words Updated

As an amateur of the language, I feel a kinship with Thomas Middleton as I read his monthly comments on words, their uses and misuses. Regarding "Weasel Words" [January], most of us have our own lists of fad words and phrases. Mine would include "viable," "at this point in time," "input," "resolve," and "in point of fact"—all of which you may confidently expect to hear at any Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club Luncheon, or New England town meeting.

Howard Daniels
Lisbon, New Hampshire

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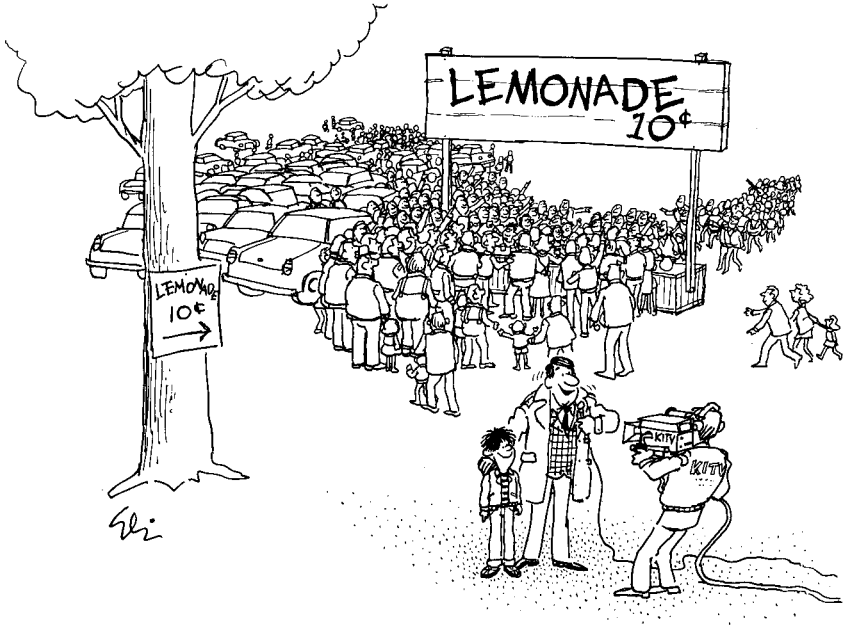

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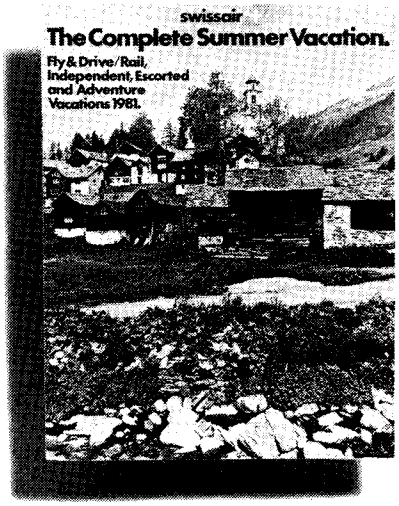

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Why Writers Matter

The following passages are from a book, Human Options, *to be published by W. W. Norton this fall.*

• THE WRITER IS a creator of options. The writer enables people to discover new truths and new possibilities within themselves and to fashion new connections to human experience. Nothing is more vital for the creative artist than access to an audience. Repressive and insecure societies keep the artist under control not by forbidding him to write or paint but by separating him from his audience. What Solzhenitsyn protested was not that he was forbidden to write but that his writing was not available to his countrymen. And great audiences, as Walt Whitman reminded us, are necessary if we want to have great poets. It is the audience that ultimately has to uphold the values of the ivory tower.

• THE WRITER PROPERLY insists on his right to express himself and to experiment as fully as he wishes. He does not believe he should be asked to explain what he means or to justify his belief that what he has produced deserves to be exhibited. But the art-loving public, even more than the artist or critic, holds the ultimate power.

• NO ONE HAS ever been able to define or synthesize that precarious, splendid, and perhaps untidy instant when a creative process begins. This is what the uniqueness of the artist is all about. Also, this is what the basic right of the artist is all about—the right to create even though he may not always know what he is doing. "It is meaningless to ask," John Dewey wrote, "what an artist 'really' means by his product; he would find different meanings in it at different days and hours and in different stages of his own development."

• THE SOCIETY THAT is troubled because the writer may not seem to know what he is doing is troubled about the wrong things. The worry should be directed rather to the narrow and tangible deeds of men who claim always to know what they are about, who are suspicious of abstract thought, and who neither comprehend nor respond to the mysteries of the creative process that separate the men from the drones. There is such a thing, Alfred North Whitehead reminds us, as the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness." Progress in human society, as in the individual, has something to do with the early and perhaps instant penetration of murky and subsurface new stirrings and the deflected perception of new energies and prospects. These are the vital ingredients for a fine hour in human affairs and for a civilizing experience.

The writer narrows the gap between the individual and society.

• AN ARTIST, LIKE a philosopher, may draw energy from what he does not know; the deeper his pursuit of the mysteries, the broader and more nourishing it becomes. And, like the scientist, he may find himself doing things without any clear idea of where he is going. But, as in both philosophy and science, what the artist doesn't know is no warrant for the celebration of ignorance, or for the annihilation of all tradition and the cumulative refinement of technique.

• CREATIVITY CAN BE stifled or throttled not just by political juggernauts but also by brutality or wickedness or squalor. It is folly, therefore, to assume that the editor or the writer or the artist has no obligation to the conditions that make creativity possible.

THE CONDITIONS OF life are inseparable from the conditions of art. The truly creative writer or artist never has to choose between the ivory tower and the arena. He moves freely from one to the other according to his needs and his concerns.

• THE RELENTLESS EROSION of a great literary talent is more than a personal tragedy, more than a national sorrow. It is loss without end for humanity itself. Writers and poets make possible the mingling of minds beyond time and circumstance, opening themselves and humanity to a view of the eternal.

• WHAT IS THE moment of triumph for the author? It is the moment of conception. This is when an important idea is born, when there is a sudden glorious clicking of the vitals of the writer, when the creative wells are full and demanding release. It is also a moment of commitment, for the writer knows that the idea will possess him until he puts down the words that will set him free again. If it is self-tyranny, it is at least the tyranny of purpose.

• THE CREATIVE PROCESS depends least of all upon accident. It requires that the mind be properly worked and tended, that it be given the blessing of silence and the gift of sequence. Whether the moment of triumph produces a spark or a thunderbolt, it is certain to have lasting effects. It can generate the carrying power to sustain an author through a thousand nights of torment at the writing desk.

• THE TROUBLE WITH some contemporary novels is that they are full of people not worth knowing. The characters slide in and out of the mind with hardly a ripple. They levy no tax on the memory; they make little claim on the connecting power of identification.

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EDITORIAL

They are always out in front of you, seldom inside you. When they suffer, you find yourself uncommitted and unengaged. They experiment with life rather than live it.

• WHAT IS IT we expect of the writer? We can certainly expect him to reflect the new spirit of the age, the spirit which points to human convergence. We can expect him to narrow the gap between the individual and society. We can expect him to shorten the distance between individual capacity and collective needs.

• ARISTOPHANES ONCE PROTESTED against what he called "traitors to the stage." He was referring to those writers who failed to make the most of the opportunities not just to entertain people but to change them and move them. The problem of the writer has always been to increase his usefulness and his accessibility. Brilliance of expression is not enough. The writer must have something to say. He must be able to get through. There can be no civilization without progress, no progress without ideas, no ideas without books. The writer helps to furnish the basic energy for human advance.

• A GOOD WRITER—or any artist, for that matter—is a prism for refracting beauty and truth. Human beings cannot live fully or joyously unless their sense of beauty is exercised and proclaimed. It is the writer's job to deal with these things of beauty in order to provide not necessarily a joy forever but a touch of loveliness that will last as long as society's capacity for beauty will last.

• ART IS THE supreme means for producing creative distortions—sometimes magnificent, sometimes terrifying—that can penetrate the false realities. Art is a system for living with unpredictables. Anyone who wants to pursue the great mysteries must be prepared to struggle with imponderables and take refuge in the imagination. "Let others wrangle, I will wonder," said Saint Augustine. Art is a way of getting through to the human subconscious, enabling people to have a greater sense of their uniqueness and fragility and preciousness than they can experience through any of the more systematic approaches.

• CULTURE IS NOT just a dialogue between specialists and critics. It involves the whole magical process by which the human situation is sustained and advanced.

• THE ABILITY OF words to throw a loop around human personality and to penetrate the inner space of character is exceeded by nothing that can be given visual form. Over the years, in numberless characterizations, attempts have been made to pictorialize Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, a depraved, debased, wanton, morally stagnant excuse for a man. Still, the visualization always falls short of the image created by the mind itself out of Wilde's words.

• HONEST EXPERIMENTATION IN the arts, always essential, is being seriously weakened by ignorance of or contempt for the past. An epidemic of imitativeness is enfeebling the development of necessary new techniques and perceptions. Shoddiness and ineptness are disguised as legitimate exercises in subjectivity or expressionism. The total result is hardly a triumph for creativity.

• NOTHING REALLY HAPPENS to a person except as it is registered in the subconscious. This is where event and feeling become memory and where the proof of life is stored. The poet—and we use the term to include all those who have respect for and speak to the human spirit—can help to supply the subconscious with material to enhance its sensitivity, thus safeguarding it.

• CREATIVE WRITING, SAID John Mason Brown, is the sweetest agony known to man. He is right. It is the one fatigue that produces inspiration, the exhaustion that exhilarates. Double-teaming the faculties of imagination and reasoning and keeping them coordinated and balanced is a tiring process, but there is something to show for your efforts. Socrates liked to refer to himself as a literary midwife—someone who helped to bring ideas to birth out of laboring minds. As a master of cerebral obstetrics, Socrates also knew and respected the conditions necessary for the conception of ideas.

• IT IS DIFFICULT to think of anything as truly modern as a book. Let us suppose that we lived in a world today without books—a world of total electronics in which all our communications were powered by transistors or by even more exotic power devices. Then let us suppose that someone suddenly came forward with a new communications invention. This invention would make the knowledge and experience of previous generations readily available to later generations. It would give people ready access to the ideas of the best minds. It would also light up the human brain with all sorts of wondrous and even joyous thoughts. The device would weigh no more than a pound or two and would be completely portable. It could also be owned by individuals at relatively low cost. The invention would be given the name "book." It would immediately be hailed as the greatest invention of the ages. —N.C.

"You're right, that is a terrible haircut—You want to buy a hat?"

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JUNE SPOTLIGHTS

Theater

What comes to mind when you think of Baltimore? Orioles? Crab cakes? H.L. Mencken? Well, no longer. Baltimore is about to go into competition with Edinburgh, Avignon, and Spoleto with an **International Theater Festival**—according to artistic director Al Kraizer the first of its kind ever held in this country. At least 12 major companies from around the world have been attracted to this three-week festival, including Britain's National Theater offering Terrence Rattigan's *The Browning Version* and *Harlequinade*, starring Alec McCowen and Geraldine McEwan; Israel's Habimah National Theater with *A Simple Tale*, by Nobel Prize winner S. Agnon; Ireland's Abbey Theater presenting Sean O'Casey's *Shadow of a Gunman*; Japan's Mamako Yoniyama & Co. mime theater; and from South Africa, in honor of Samuel Beckett's 75th birthday, the Baxter Theater of Capetown's production of *Waiting for Godot*, with Tony Award winners John Kani and Winston Ntshona. Festival productions will be held in theaters throughout the city. (June 6 through 27.)

Israel's Habimah Theater in Baltimore.

Dance

Britain's **Royal Ballet** is celebrating its 50th anniversary with an American tour, beginning this month at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. If the company's present stars—including Merle Park and Anthony Dowell—have less hysterical éclat than former superstars Fonteyn and Nureyev, the company nonetheless is the chief repository of ballets by Sir Frederick Ashton whom *SR* critic Walter Terry considers one of the greatest choreographers of this century.

The anniversary tour will feature three American premieres: *Rhapsody*, set by Ashton to music by Rachmaninoff; an "impressionistic" ballet inspired by the life of Isadora Duncan, called appropriately *Isadora*, choreographed by Kenneth MacMillan; and *Gloria*, also by MacMillan, to Poulenc's popular chorale. (In New York City, June 15 through July 4; then on to Toronto, Washington, and Boston.)

ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX, NEW YORK

Ed Emshwiller's experimental *Sunstone* will be shown at the National Video Festival.

Video

This month, the American Film Institute (with a little help from Sony Corp.) will sponsor a **National Video Festival** at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. The festival will offer five days of screenings, panels, and exhibits organized by video curators from museums across the country.

The festival will explore avant-garde video—and even its staunchest advocates usually admit that experimental TV can be numbingly dull. Still, work by the most stimulating video pioneers (Ed Emshwiller, Nam June Paik) will be on view, and there is general agreement that what the best video artists attempt today generally finds its way into network TV commercials a year or two from now and into the commonly accepted language of network programs soon after. A work like Paik's *Lake Placid '80* is, if nothing else, a display of lively technical bravura, and the festival will screen it along with other video experiments worthy of note. (June 3 through 7.)

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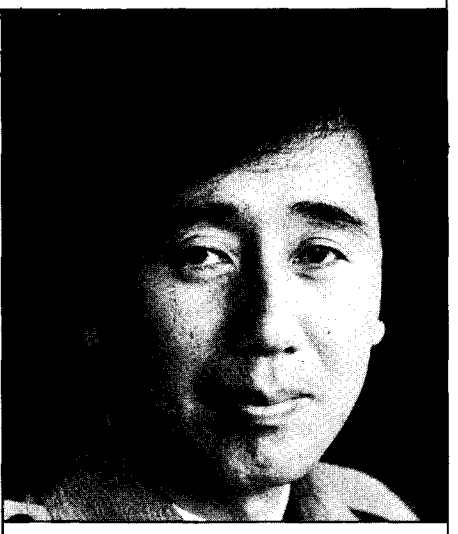
ıifer Penney and Julian Hosking in *Gloria*.

Opera

The **St. Louis Opera** is youthful in every sense of the word. This summer, it is offering only its sixth season under the direction of 39-year-old founder, Richard Gaddes, with a cast of talented, young, but not-yet-famous American singers. Still, despite its youth, the company has sent veterans on to international acclaim (such as soprano Ashley Putnam), and it has begun attracting favorable notice for its forays into adventurous repertoire.

The current season, with the St. Louis Symphony in the pit, offers two American premieres worth attention. The first is Frederick Delius's one-act opera *Fennimore and Gerda*, the tale of a poet's two loves. Staged by Frank Corsaro and conducted by Christopher Keene, the opera will share a double-bill with Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's *Secret of Suzanne*. The second premiere will be *An Actor's Revenge*, by Japanese composer Minoru Miki, who will conduct. Filled with Oriental sword fights, *An Actor's Revenge* tells of a young Kabuki actor who avenges the deaths of his parents, and in so doing unwittingly causes the death of his own beloved. (*Fennimore* premieres June 3; *Revenge* June 11.)

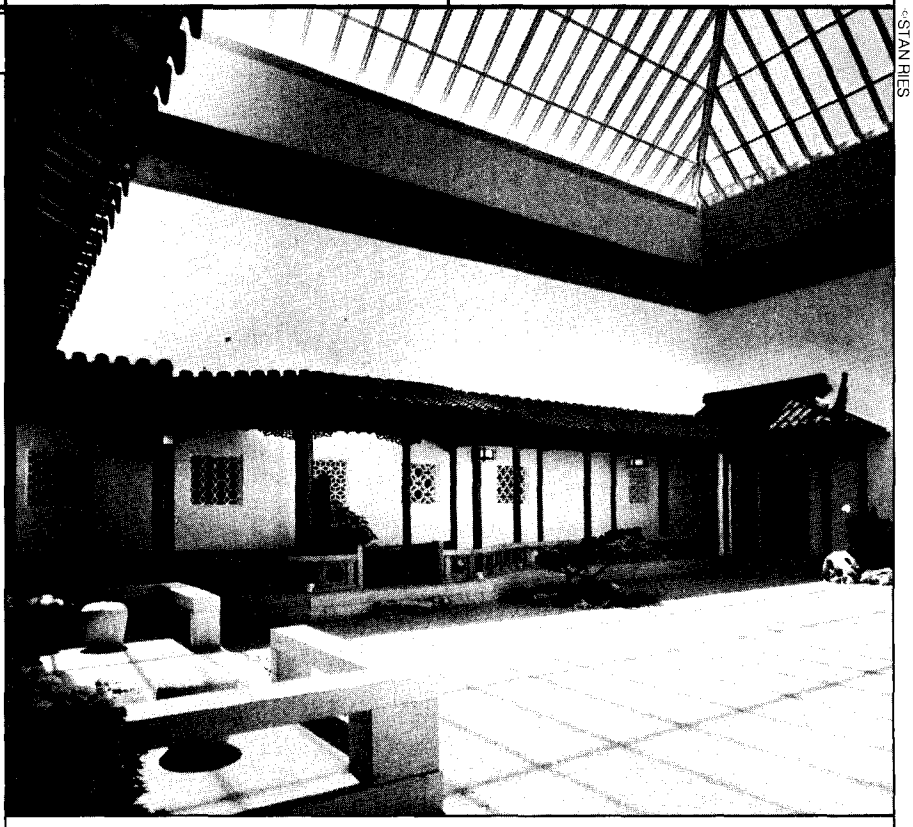


Minoru Miki's opera comes to St. Louis.

Art

The Chinese characters inscribed over the "moon gate" leading into the new **Astor Court** at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City mean "In Search of Quietude." If it's quietude you're looking for, you'll probably have more luck among the medieval armaments. It's our guess the newly installed Chinese court will be mobbed. And rightly so.

Chinese craftsmen sent over from the People's Republic have painstakingly recreated a private courtyard, copying the Garden of the Fishing Nets in Suzhou, China. The workmen used original materials and age-old traditional techniques in the installation. The garden will form the centerpiece of the Met's new Far Eastern wing, including the Douglas Dillon Galleries for Chinese painting—where much of the museum's Oriental art collection, until now stored away in the basement for lack of space, will be on view for the first time—and a Ming furniture room. (Opening June 18.)



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The Metropolitan Museum of Art's new "Ming-Dynasty" garden court in New York City.

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Director Steven Spielberg

New Epic, Big Stakes

by Robert F. Moss

Speaking for the Hollywood directors of his generation, George Lucas once said, "We are the pigs. We are the ones who sniff out the truffles. The man in the executive tower cannot do that.... The power lies with us—the ones who actually know how to make movies." Among the truffles he had in mind were Francis Coppola's *The Godfather*, Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and his own *Star Wars*, films that together have generated $478.1 million in domestic and Canadian rentals, establishing their directors at the forefront of the industry. Joined by more recent arrivals such as John Landis (*Animal House*) and Michael Cimino (*The Deer Hunter*), this new royalty was quickly courted by studio executives, with their checkbooks at the ready.

But over the last two years the new princelings were responsible for a succession of lavishly budgeted disappointments—Coppola's $31 million *Apocalypse Now*, Landis's $30 million *The Blues Brothers*, Spielberg's $30 million *1941*, and Cimino's $37.6 million *Heaven's Gate*—movies that tarnished their makers' glory and prompted accusations of excess and self-indulgence. Worse, these bloated debacles arrived at a time when Hollywood was quietly panicking over dismaying financial statistics: Both ticket sales and profits have declined in each of the last two years, and overall movie attendance is about one-quarter of what it was in the post World War II period. Many observers in the press—and in executive suites—feel certain that the film industry's palsied state was brought on, in part, by the extravagance of her prodigal sons, the Lucas-Coppola-Spielberg generation, by their predilection for a budgetary munificence that permitted profits only on full-scale blockbusters.

This month, director Steven Spielberg will have a chance to reclaim the crumbling respect Hollywood has had for him and his colleagues when his splashy $20 million adventure film, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, a pastiche of old movie serials produced by none other than George Lucas and underwritten by Paramount, opens around the country. If the film is a hit, Spielberg could win back the nearly limitless opportunities Hollywood once offered its *wunderkind* directors. If he fails, their future opportunities could melt and shrivel like celluloid in a flame.

At 33, Spielberg must be the most convincing incarnation of the boy genius to hit Hollywood since Irving Thalberg. He has even ensconced himself at Thalberg's old studio, MGM, where he will direct his next film. His attire is California-casual—jeans, an open-collared shirt, a simple sports jacket—the style favored by the new breed of film directors. With his tousled brown hair, slim build, and seamless face, Spielberg looks as young as he is. The visitor has to keep reminding himself that this unassuming young man alone can claim to have directed two of the 10 highest-grossing movies ever made (*Jaws* and *Close Encounters*).

As befits a prodigy, Spielberg's own career began at 13 when, in the course of an ordinary middle-class adolescence in Scottsdale, Arizona, he shot an eight-mm western that ran three and a half minutes. At 16, he anticipated his UFO extravaganza *Close Encounters* with some juvenilia called *Firelight*, a two-and-a-half-hour sci-fi saga.

While nominally studying English at California State College in Long Beach, Spielberg was actually out making films, one of which, a short called *Amblin'*, led to a contract in the TV division of MCA Universal. After a couple of well-received television movies, *Duel* and *Something Evil*, Spielberg's work came to the attention of the powerhouse production team of Richard J. Zanuck and David Brown. Soon the prodigy (now all of 25) was directing his first feature, *The Sugarland Express*. The movie generated only moderate business at the box office, but it received excellent notices and impressed studio executives. Zanuck still marvels at the complicated camera set-ups for certain sequences in *Sugarland Express*: "Veteran cameramen were amazed at what this kid could do." Similarly, Lawrence Kasdan, who wrote the screenplay for *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, says of Spielberg: "I don't think anyone in the world moves a camera better than Steven does. I don't think anyone else has that kind of innate talent for what really works in terms of exciting the eye."

Spielberg's second film for Zanuck and Brown was *Jaws*. Six weeks after the film was released, one out of eight Americans had rushed to a theater somewhere to be scared witless by an ingenious mechanical shark. Of the eventual take, $186.1 million in the U.S. and Canada, Spielberg's share was four million—after taxes. His next film, *Close Encounters*, with its sweet-natured spacemen in their awesome ships, proved to be another triumphal march to the bank for everyone concerned ($103.5 million in domestic returns) and was, in general, flatteringly reviewed as well. Spielberg decided to try

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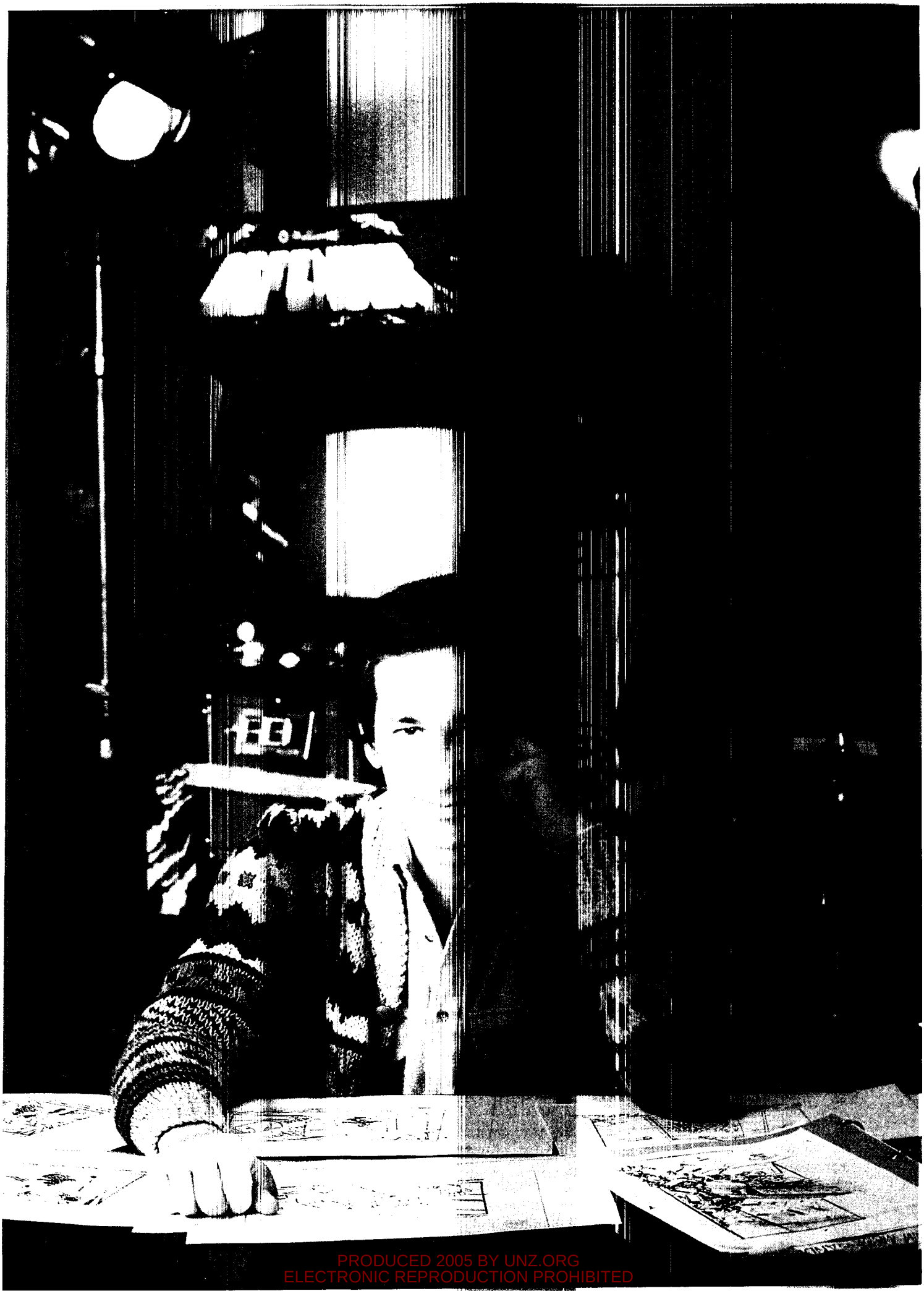

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a comedy next, *1941*, a zany story of the chaos that Los Angeles wreaked on itself when a lone Japanese submarine surfaced during World War II off the coast of California. But his gift for cataclysmic effects was ill-suited to humor, and the mirthless exercise, released in 1979, was greeted with bristling anger from the critics and relative indifference from filmgoers.

Despite the extremes of Spielberg's successes and more recent failure, his personal life is neither overly glamorous nor notably ascetic. He still lives in a house he bought years ago for $49,500, located in Coldwater Canyon—a comfortable community, to be sure, but several notches below the opulent luxe of Beverly Hills. For years he drove a bullet-riddled heap salvaged for $400 from *Sugarland Express*. And he still nurses the emotional wounds left over from his three-year romance with actress Amy Irving, a relationship that terminated abruptly last year, just short of the altar. Spielberg describes the aftereffects of this affair as the worst emotional scars he ever sustained apart from his parents' divorce.

This vulnerable, unsophisticated openness may, in fact, be the secret behind much of Spielberg's success as a filmmaker. Screenwriter and director John Milius observes that the directors of his generation, including Spielberg, are like children playing with very expensive toys. Both Roy Scheider, star of *Jaws*, and Lawrence Kasdan echo this theme. "He's a kid and he responds to film as a kid," says Kasdan, and Scheider notes, "He sees his stories almost from a child's eye. The child in *Close Encounters* is Steve himself."

Like his colleagues—George Lucas of *Star Wars*, for instance, or Michael Cimino of *Heaven's Gate*—Spielberg has a weakness for the large-screen epic. "Steve loves the challenge of doing big jumbo-jet pictures," says Milius. "He thrives on the kind of movies that require terrific planning and perfect execution." Roy Scheider agrees: "He likes to make big films with a large scope, and if it takes a lot of money to do it he's not afraid to spend the money."

Spielberg denies that the big-budget films he and his colleagues adore are in any way responsible for the movie industry's current financial doldrums, as critics have suggested. "The press loves to design its own failures," protests Spielberg. "Although nobody liked *The Blues Brothers*, nobody wants to admit that it's going to do almost $60 million worth of business around the world. As for *1941*, we need $60 million to get into the black and we're about $11 million short. But based on TV, cassette, cable, and reissue money, Universal is confident that the film will make that $11 million. Still, the critics bury their heads in the sand and say, 'How could this film do $50-60 million when I gave it the worst review I've ever written?' Believe me, Hollywood is not being crippled by $30 million movies."

According to Spielberg's diagnosis, Hollywood is simply suffering from the effects of inflation like the rest of the nation. "Directors are not to blame for rising costs," he insists, pointing out that expenses have climbed so rapidly over the past few years that the average film budget today is $10 million, roughly the cost of a large-scale movie like *Jaws* in 1975. The paychecks that superstars on the order of Newman or Redford demand, somewhere in the $3-5 million range, have been an additional burden. Notes producer Zanuck, "We made *The Sting* with Newman *and* Redford for only $4 million in 1974."

To Spielberg, many of the philippics against the big-budgeted productions of his peers are simply the result of ignorance. "When I hear criticism like that," he remarks heatedly, "I want to ask, 'How do you know? You weren't there. Were you the producer? Do you know how many tanks and cars were needed in *1941*? Do you know we actually used fewer than the script required and the budget still came out to $30 million?'" He also insists that important directors have "earned the right to spend someone else's money," to build whole cinematic pyramids as long as every block is hauled into place to satisfy an artist's vision.

Clearly, Spielberg's argument will prove more persuasive if *Raiders of the Lost Ark* turns out to be a success. The story is essentially a coinage of George Lucas's imagination, another attempt by the creator of Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker at an act of pulp genius. The action, set in 1936, takes place in exotic locales decorated with cursed idols, sacred scrolls, snake pits, and cobra-infested ruins. The hero is one Indiana Jones (Harrison Ford), an archaeologist-adventurer-secret agent who is sent hurtling about the world in search of an ark containing the actual tablets on which the Ten Commandments were first written. The magically charged tablets seem to

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promise omnipotent powers to the possessor, and Jones's rivals for the tablets are those notorious omnipotence seekers, the Nazis. The romantic interest in the story is supplied by Marion Ravenwood (Karen Allen), the leather-tongued doyenne of a gin mill in Nepal.

In the obligatory series of "close calls," the good guys are harried by tarantulas, trap doors, poisonous snakes, treacherous natives, and sadistic Germans. The many-colored excitement of *Raiders* also includes a phantasmagoric finish when the ark, whose contents turn out to be a portable apocalypse, is finally opened. Predictably, Lucas is as sequel-minded as ever and has drafted outlines for four more *Raider* scenarios.

If *Raiders* repeats the success of *Close Encounters* the question "Is it art?" will seem almost irrelevant. When the story is hurtling the audience along, who cares that Spielberg's successes are peopled with papier mâché characterizations? In *Jaws*, for instance, the three principals are carefully individualized, but their personalities are quickly submerged in the elemental hunt for a shark. (Indeed, the film succeeds as entertainment in large measure because it completely excises the banal, interpersonal angst Peter Benchley layered over his characters in the novel.)

In *Close Encounters*, the problems of the telephone lineman played by Richard Dreyfuss and the forlorn mother played by Melinda Dillon are obliterated by blinding lights and dazzling spaceships. In *1941*, the characters are no more than frenzied carnival masks and, in any event, their individual voices are lost in the cacophony of destruction going on around them. Only *Sugarland Express*, based on a true incident and lashed to a strong screenplay by Hal Barwood and Matthew Robbins, displays more interest in people than in machines, sea beasts, or space creatures.

Top: A bearded Spielberg at work on *Raiders of the Lost Ark* with stars Karen Allen and Harrison Ford. Bottom: The Nazis have pushed Marion Ravenwood (Allen) into a pit believed to contain the lost ark. Indiana Jones (Ford) prepares to catch her.

It is, perhaps, the only sign of Spielbergian hubris that he rejects this criticism. "If a film works," he says, "it's usually because of the characters and not the special effects. Empathy with the people in the film is important because you sure can't empathize with a shark or 90 police cars or a spaceship." In the case of *Raiders*, Spielberg asserts that Indiana Jones is "not a cardboard hero but rather a human being with ordinary frailties." Screenwriter Kasdan differs sharply on this point, however, depicting the story conferences as a friendly tug of war in which he strove to deepen (and even darken) Jones's character, while Spielberg and Lucas favored more action and spectacle. Says Kasdan. "I became worried that the thing was becoming a straight action piece, which is probably the way it turned out." A loss for art, perhaps, but given the stakes riding on *Raiders*, probably a strong commercial plus.

Right now, *Raiders* needs every plus it can muster. For even if it proves to be another phenomenal blockbuster, studio bosses are paying careful attention to the comfortable profits thrown off by more modest movies, such as *Ordinary People*, a $6.7 million film, directed by Robert Redford that swept the Oscars, insuring it of comfortable grosses. It joins a number of other comparatively inexpensive movies, such as *Nine to Five*, *The Jerk*, and *Coal Miner's Daughter*, that have attracted large audiences without mounting a costly jamboree of special effects. Budgeted at $20 million, *Raiders* may sound like a cut-rate item by Spielberg's standards, but today's advertising and distribution costs require that the film bring in $50 million to finish in the black.

Spielberg, too, is paying careful attention to the success of "smaller" movies. "It will always be possible to make films like *Ordinary People* and *Kramer vs. Kramer*," he notes, "though they may cost $15 million instead of $7 million in a few more years." What worries Spielberg is that "large-scale productions are becoming prohibitive. The average adventure movie will cost $20 million in less than a decade. The average disaster movie will cost $50 million." Lucas explains that both he and Spielberg are "concentrating on this big production-value type film now—while we can still afford it."

Does this mean that the big-screen epic is about to vanish forever, irrespective of *Raiders'* success or failure? Not at all, insists Spielberg, radiating optimism: "The audience for movies may be shrinking, but it hasn't shrunk so much that *Jaws* and *Star Wars* can't gross a total of $850 million worldwide. People do want to get out of their homes, and they will park in dark lots, risk robbery, and stand on line in the rain to see a good film. The audience is still there for movies that are different, that are unique, that are entertaining." Right now, Hollywood's Young Turks are hoping that a triumphant *Raiders of the Lost Ark* will allow them to go on making the kind of grand-scale "good film" they believe in. ■

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The Crusade to Ban Books

by Stephen Arons

On the night of November 7, 1975, two members of the Board of Education of the Island Trees Union Free School District in New York State slipped out of a school sports festival and talked the night janitor into admitting them to the high school library. Armed with a list of "objectionable books" that they had received at a conservative political conference two months earlier, they searched the card catalogue for volumes they would later label "mentally dangerous." They found nine, many of which deal with the experiences of Jews, blacks, or Hispanics.

By March 1976, the school board had ordered 11 books removed from the library shelves and had banned them from use in the school's curriculum. The titles included Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, and *Best Short Stories by Negro Writers*, edited by Langston Hughes. As predicted by the Island Trees superintendent of schools, over whose objections the board acted, the usually placid, middle class, and predominantly white suburb of New York City was thrown into turmoil.

In January 1977, Steven Pico and four other students filed suit challenging the removal of the books. Four years of legal skirmishing followed in which the school board asserted a limitless power to indoctrinate students with community values while the student plaintiffs claimed a First Amendment right to be free of "the pall of orthodoxy." The book banners of Island Trees do not think of themselves as censors, but as protectors of traditional morality in a hostile world. Frank Martin, the disarming police detective who serves as school board president, states the bottom line as "whether parents have the right to exercise power over what is taught in public schools they pay for." The plaintiffs, whose parents also wish to exercise power over what is taught in school, believe that a legitimate desire for influencing education has gotten out of control, turning into an unconstitutional exercise in intolerance and miseducation.

In March 1981, the United States Circuit Court of Appeals capped the legal maneuvering by ordering the case to trial. The ruling has virtually assured a public examination of what is likely to become the most dramatic and legally significant example of school censorship on record.

The *Pico* case is only part of a pattern of intense local battles erupting around the country as opposing forces arm themselves for what could become a destructive war over books in America's schools and school libraries. The insurgents, whose ideological supply lines extend deep into the right wing and its quasi-religious satellites, are well organized; and the advocates of civil liberty in the nation's schools are reading reports from the front with alarm. "The community of the book," as Random House vice president Anthony Shulte calls it, is beginning to prepare for a long struggle whose outcome is by no means clear.

Incoming battle reports include a nationwide survey made public April 30 by its sponsors, the Association of American Publishers, The American Library Association, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. The survey indicates that the nation is in the midst of a surge of book censorship which seems designed to cut off independent thought at its educational roots. Nearly 2,000 responses from 7,500 public school administrators and librarians point to the involvement of more than 20 percent of the nation's school districts and 30 percent of its school libraries in challenges to literary works and textbooks.

Unfortunately for the nation's authors, their publishers and readers, the AAP report understates the magnitude of the movement to ban books. Ira Glasser, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, calls the proliferating challenges to books "an epidemic of future shock" among individuals who "have little more in common than insecurity and fear of a world they can no longer understand." Judith Krug, director of the ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee, is alarmed that the number of reported incidents of attempted book censorship in school and public libraries ballooned immediately after the November 4 election of Ronald Reagan, and has continued at a record rate along with the rising fortunes of the new right.

Casualties are mounting. Attacks have already succeeded against works by Brautigan, Ferlinghetti, Ginsberg, Heller, Huxley, Kesey, Orwell, Plath, Salinger, Vonnegut, and scores of lesser authors. In Indiana, North Dakota, and Nebraska, books are burned because they challenge biblical conceptions of the world, while teachers are hounded out of the classroom or fired. Solzhenitsyn is banned in New Lisbon, Maine, as well as in Moscow; Malamud's *The Fixer* is viewed as "anti-Semitic" in Island Trees, and is trashed along with Langston Hughes who is alleged by white school board members to be "anti-Negro." In Springfield, Missouri, Maurice Sendak's four-year-old character, Mickey, of *In the Night Kitchen*, must wear Magic Marker shorts lest kindergartners be corrupted by his

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cartoon nudity. The high school children of one district of New York City may not read about life in the barrios of a neighboring district. The legislatures of 15 states are asked to require that Genesis be given equal time with evolution in science classes. Whole dictionaries are banned because they contain multiple definitions for "bed," "knock," and "shack."

Book banning in Island Trees shares with many other such incidents an origin outside the local community and an idea of educational evaluation that goes no further than lists of out-of-context quotations and underlined vulgarities. The Island Trees board members had attended a state-wide conference sponsored by Parents of New York United (PONY-U) where they heard talks by representatives of the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation and received lists of books found offensive by various groups around the United States with little resemblance to Island Trees. The level of thinking of the board members who banned *Slaughterhouse Five* as "anti-Christian" is reflected in the following portion of a deposition taken by the plaintiffs in *Pico* of a board member:

Q: What did you know about *A Reader for Writers*?
A: I didn't know anything about it.
Q: Why did you join in ordering its removal?
A: To find out what was in it.
Q: What made you think there was something wrong with it?
A: It was on the list.

An evaluation of the books by a board-appointed committee was instituted only after the books had been banned. The board ignored most of its committee's recommendations and continued the ban against all but one book.

The central legal question in *Pico* is whether there can be any such thing as censorship in a public school—whether there are *any* actions that a school board could take in an effort to inculcate community values in school children which would violate the First Amendment. Board president Frank Martin states plainly that "parents feel schools are an extension of the home and feel no book should be in school that they would not allow in the home." The problem, of course, is "whose home is the public school?" Martin, who recently ran unopposed for the board, sees no such problem: "It's quite simple. I'm the elected representative of the people. I'm directed by the mandate of the voters." Alan Levine, chief counsel for the students in *Pico*, is willing to discuss some of the evidence he plans to use in his effort to demonstrate that the rights of individual families cannot be made to rest upon the whim of the majority, even in the schools.

In justifying its actions, the school board has relied heavily on the alleged vulgarity of language in the banned books, though no claim of obscenity has ever been made. Levine plans to demonstrate that the vulgarity claim is a mere pretext, that "cloaked in the censorship of words was implicit a view of America" that the board did not want contradicted by literature available in the library. Levine is confident it will not be hard to show that the claim that Malamud's *The Fixer* is "anti-Semitic" is "pure doublethink."

The plaintiffs will attempt to show also that the board's procedures in banning the books were as irrational as their judgments about the books' themes. From the board's rubber-stamp reliance on lists supplied by state and national political organizations to its "first the sentence, later the trial" process of evaluating the books, its abandonment of sound educational reasoning and elementary fairness to all parties is the common theme.

Another effect of the reign of hysteria brought on by the censors was the creation of a climate of fear in schools and community. Levine plans to show that, to this day, the irrationality and rough-shod emotionalism of the book banning have left teachers, students, and members of the community intimidated and unable to deliver education that in Levine's words "is about opening minds, not closing them."

The *Pico* case is not the only situation in which resistance to censorship is becoming more articulate and more public. As publishers, librarians, teachers, and the citizen trustees of the education system become aware of the scope of the problem, the community of the book and the constituents of the First Amendment are beginning to organize. Seymour Lawrence is co-publisher with Dell of several of Richard Brautigan's works that have been banned in a school system north of San Francisco. He became the first publisher to take legal action on behalf of an author and the right of young adults to read when he joined as plaintiff in a suit seeking reinstatement of the books.

In late January, the AAP joined with the ACLU and the ALA in sponsoring a two-day colloquium in which publishers and lawyers discussed legal and political strategy and the marshalling of forces for the coming book wars. Central to these discussions was a search for legal theories that are capable of harmonizing the existence of majority control of schooling with the First Amendment rights of parents and students who dissent from the values of their neighbors. In any other setting, the right of free expression would be held to prohibit the government or political majority from controlling the content of communication. In schools, however, the accepted practice is local government control of the indoctrination of children. The problem is how to distinguish appropriate indoctrination from instances of censorship that undercut freedom of thought, hobble community tolerance, and turn schools into ideological battlegrounds.

Publishers, civil libertarians, and school organizations are looking more carefully at how excessive pressure can

COURTESY NEW YORK TEACHER STAFF

The Island Trees Board of Education meeting in 1977 when Steven Pico filed suit.

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destroy the delicate balance of interests that makes majority control of schools tolerable to the minority. Many are becoming more convinced that, as Dorothy Massie of the Teacher's Rights Division of NEA puts it, "the connection between censorship in schools and politics in Washington is not so tenuous as some might imagine." After a careful review of censorship, professor of education Charles Park at the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater, concluded that "the evidence reflects with startling clarity that right-wing interests have found the public schools a convenient target for unifying ultra-conservative ideology and traditional morality for political gain."

The destabilization of schools is a common effect of struggles in which, as one school superintendent put it, "local control is confused with vocal control." In example after example, a small number of people cloaked in the garb of "pro-family" ideology become intellectual terrorists laying siege to school boards and administrators and cutting them off from the fragile consensus of tolerance on which they depend. By locating, stimulating, and reinforcing local censors, right-wing organizations have gained voting and financial support for a galaxy of conservative causes and have begun moving the public's conception of the nation's problems further to the right.

The involvement of national right-wing groups in censorship issues appears repeatedly. Some, such as Education Research Analysts (run by Mel and Norma Gabler), provide book "reviews" that, by quotation and page reference, make it unnecessary for local citizens to read a book in order to condemn it. The AAP survey discovered that more than half the state-level school officials responding noted the involvement of the Gablers. Others, such as the electronic preachers of Moral Majority, National Christian Action Coalition, and anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly, make use of computerized mailings, newsletters, television broadcasts, and state conferences to direct the anger of frustrated parents against unresponsive schools and uncomprehended literature:

- In a November 1980 "Dear Friend" letter, Jerry Falwell of Moral Majority urges parents to fight books that contain information about sexuality because "the liberals and humanists are slowly 'sneaking in' perverted and anti-moral sex educational material among public school systems."
- In the December 1980 issue of *Eagle Forum*, Phyllis Schlafly anticipates the creation of her national "Anti-textbook Textbook Censorship Committee" in accusing feminists of "conducting gestapo-like censorship of textbooks to purge them of words, pictures, and concepts which encourage the traditional family, motherhood and ladylike behavior."
- Education Research Analysts prepares its own reviews of school texts for national distribution. In one list of objections to a reading series, the reviewer writes "Communism not treated realistically (too favorable). . . . UNICEF is a known Communist front." A review of *Soul on Ice*, written by a parent and circulated by the Gablers, states "Written on theme of overthrowing the U.S. government. . ., believes in no God and believes all religions are phony. . ., tells of his delights in breaking white man's law."

The plaintiffs argue that education should open minds—not close them.

With the moralistic juggernaut underway, would-be defenders of literature fear the consequences of opposing censorship. One school board member, Rayma Page of Lee County, Florida, reports facing her stiffest election campaign since 1968 after insisting that established procedures be used to decide whether *Soul on Ice*, *Catch-22*, and *Catcher in the Rye* should be banned from her 31,000-pupil district. While denying the existence of any Moral Majority "hit list" of school-board members, Dr. Rayburn Blair, Florida state chairman of Moral Majority, does acknowledge plans for an "index that would reveal the way board members voted" on book-selection issues. There is nothing illegal about the provision of such information. But Page, the incoming president of National School Boards Association, sees these lists as implements of intolerance.

Many parents struggling over the content of school libraries and curricula are expressing a sincere and understandable concern for the atmosphere in which their children are raised. According to Dr. Onalee McGraw, consultant to the Heritage Foundation, these parents tend to be "ordinary, non-upper-class, nonprofessional types," who for a long time "have not been public or mad, and who finally had to take a stand because something was just not right in public schools."

The collapse of values perceived by parents in schools and culture aggravates the already thorny question of how to select and maintain library collections in public schools. "In days when we had consensus on core values," says McGraw, a community advisory board was satisfactory for libraries, "but today we've lost that consensus and any mechanism of citizen committees becomes a matter of manipulation." The loss of consensus complicates the central problem these parents see in professional librarians, professional educators, and the culture in general: the inability to make moral judgments. McGraw is sympathetic with parents troubled by "the unwillingness to make moral distinctions between levels of readership and to face up to difficult moral questions."

The explanations for the attractiveness of censorship to ordinarily apolitical people are not hard to understand for liberal civil libertarians either. Ira Glasser cites with sympathy the fact that "many groups feel incapable of maintaining their values and insulating them from an alien and dominant culture." Now, Glasser observes, these feelings of impotence and alienation are being translated into strident and sophisticated campaigns of intolerance aimed at using government schools to "prevent teenagers from being exposed to ideas that challenge their thinking." He notes, "The sociological crisis is probably a product of transition in American life. It is essential that the First Amendment not become a casualty of a frantic attempt to deal with the insecurities of this transition."

Whether the First Amendment can provide any leverage in dealing with the pressure for orthodoxy in the schools is the question posed by the upcoming *Pico* trial. As it organizes its forces and plans strategies, the community of the book will be watching *Pico* carefully; and it will be aware, thanks to the AAP, that while *Pico* is the next, it is not the last major battle in the book wars. ■

Stephen Arons is director of legal studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

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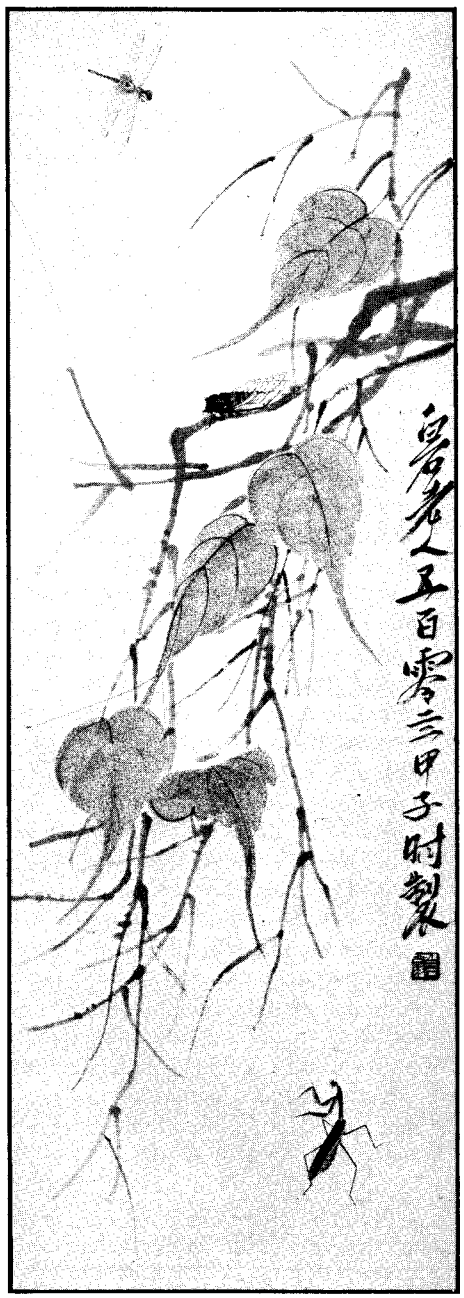
Hidden Perils in Chinese Art

by Peter Z. Grossman

The shopper was clearly excited. Having gone through floor after floor of Bloomingdale's China promotion and seeing nothing but assembly-line fashions and improbable baubles like peasant manure-buckets done up as houseplanters, he arrived wide-eyed at a section stocked with Chinese artworks, mostly antique porcelains. "This is it," he said happily. He peered into a display case filled with blue-and-white plates and bowls, and he summoned a companion over to his side. "Look at these things," he told her. "That's the real stuff! You don't get to see much of that around."

He was wrong. All over the country shoppers are seeing similar displays of Chinese artworks—porcelains, paintings, textiles, carvings, and so on. Other department stores and countless art and antiques galleries have been promoting and selling Chinese art feverishly. In recent months, Bloomingdale's only added powder to an already exploding market, and of course, the store made owning it chic. This month, the market will receive the ultimate gilding of fashionability when New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art opens its new "Ming Dynasty" garden as well as two new galleries displaying Chinese furniture and painting. (See June Spotlights, page 11.)

But though the market is flying, it's in disarray. At present, few people know which works are worthwhile and fewer still are sure what any of them are worth. The market is glutted with second-hand works, "antiques" that are old but so common as to be virtually worthless (a fact most buyers don't know)—and an alarming number of outright fakes, many so good that expert appraisers refuse to offer guarantees of authenticity for *any* Chinese work. Everyone—except maybe Bloomingdale's—seems more than a little bewildered by it all. Yet prices keep soaring and Americans keep spending more and more on Chinese art.



COURTESY CHRISTIE'S

The boom actually started in the early Seventies when Americans began to visit China for the first time in decades. Travelers came back with photographs and, occasionally, pieces of Chinese art. Some travelers returned with whole collections of it. Still, it was only after the People's Republic of China began selling boatloads of art over here a few years ago that the Chinese art market really took off.

Just how much money we are spending is impossible to say with so many stores and galleries selling it. But some idea of the growth of the market can be found in the sales figures of the North American branches of the world's two major auction houses, Christie's and Sotheby's. At the former, auction sales of Chinese art brought $1.3 million in 1977. Each subsequent year, the total grew, and in 1980 Chinese art sales topped $5 million. At Sotheby's, growth was equally dramatic. During its 1977-78 season, the Chinese art department reported sales totaling $1.8 million. Two years later, it brought in $5.6 million, making Chinese art one of Sotheby's fastest growing departments. Last November, its sale of works from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Bernat brought in $3.3 million alone.

Prices for works of all kinds of Chinese art have been zooming. The highest prices have gone for porcelains; in the Bernat sale, a single piece brought a

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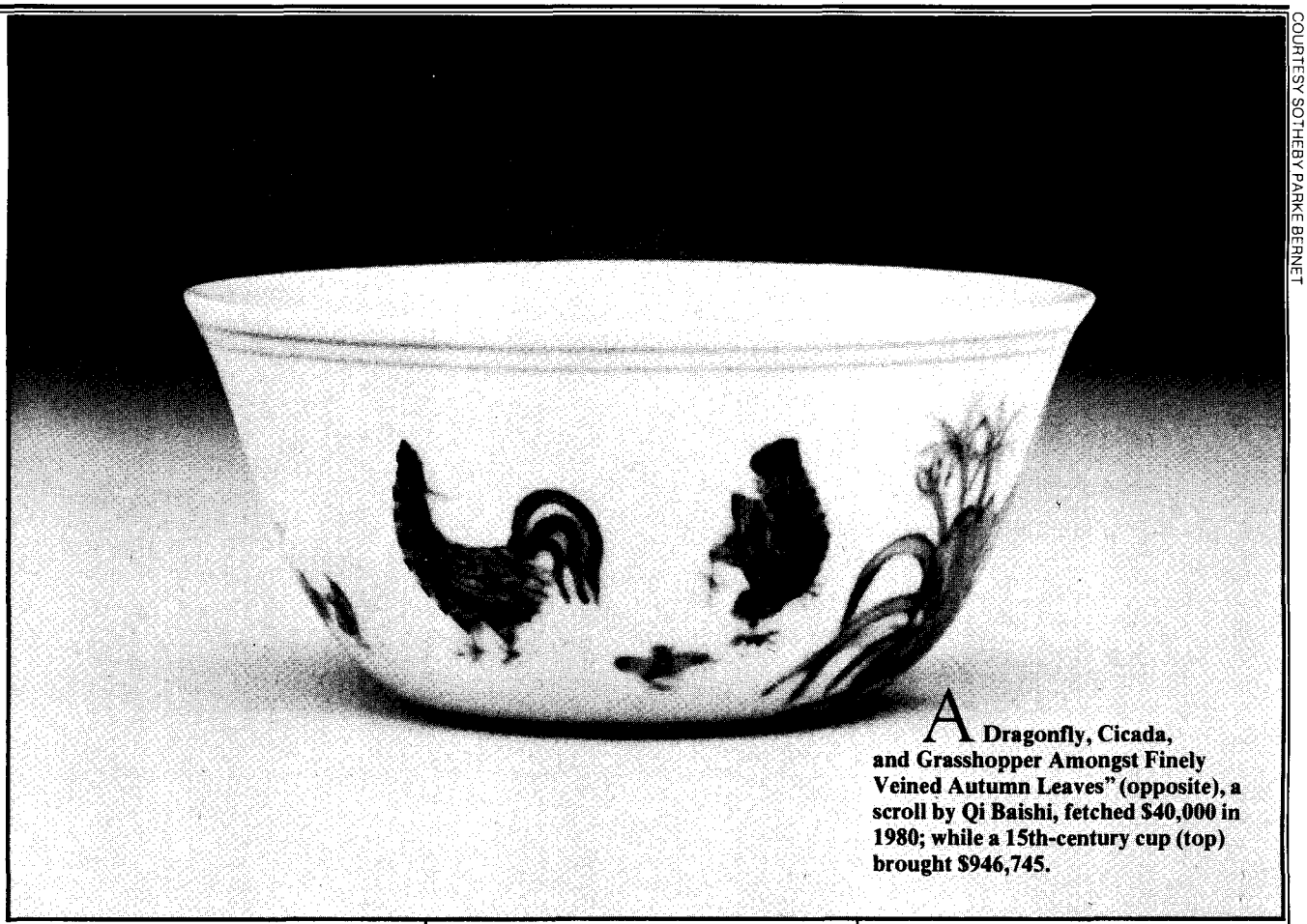

COURTESY SOTHEBY PARKE BERNET

A Dragonfly, Cicada, and Grasshopper Amongst Finely Veined Autumn Leaves" (opposite), a scroll by Qi Baishi, fetched $40,000 in 1980; while a 15th-century cup (top) brought $946,745.

North American auction record of $500,000. But since Americans have collected porcelains for many years, good pieces have always been relatively expensive. Lately, though, collectors have turned to other forms of Chinese art like pottery, bronzes, fine textiles, and paintings, and the prices for all have jumped.

Of course, ancient works—400 or more years old—have always attracted some attention for historical reasons alone. But in the last few years, Americans have also discovered modern Chinese paintings: At a sale last November at Christie's, works by three modern Chinese artists posted new auction price records.

Qi Baishi, whose work combines a freshness of form and composition with an engaging wit, topped the group. His "A Dragonfly, Cicada, and Grasshopper Amongst Finely Veined Leaves," a work of extraordinary delicacy, went for $40,000. Thirty years ago, his work was available for less than $100, and 20 years before that, for pennies. Yet at present, his name is so well recognized that any of his paintings—he painted something like 10,000 works—will bring bids of at least $2,000.

Works by the other two artists, Fu Baoshi and Zhang Daqian, are sought after almost as eagerly. The former is renowned for his highly individual figure paintings, and the $36,000 record paid for his "Scholars Playing Weiqi Below Plantain" was no surprise to his admirers; they considered it one of his finest works. Zhang Daqian (the only one of the three who's still alive, though he's over 80 and going blind) has come to the fore because of his mastery of virtually every traditional style of Chinese painting. His sweeping "Flying Aspara" went for $15,000 at the Christie's sale, and at a Hong Kong auction a few weeks later another of his paintings fell for about $28,000.

But are these paintings really worth what sellers are getting? It's impossible to say. Experts are divided. Dealers like Dr. John Fong of Johnstone-Fong in Philadelphia believe that good Chinese paintings are ridiculously *under*priced. But Asian art expert Colin D. Sheaf of Christie's, among others, calls Chinese paintings a "slightly dangerous market that's just finding its feet."

Eventually, of course, the market will get its bearings, but it hasn't yet. Auction estimates are often amazingly out of line—both high and low. Says Sotheby's resident Chinese-painting expert, Paula Gasparello, "We still don't have enough sales to know how prices will fall into place." What's more, the demand for good pieces is far outstripping the supply. The highly respected New York dealer Alice Boney comments, "It's getting harder and harder to find anything anymore."

But wait. How can that be? All of those department-store displays, all of those jam-packed shops and galleries? In fact, this apparent contradiction is an important reason why the market is so badly skewed. Rarities and fine works are becoming harder to find while the market becomes glutted with the second-rate. Almost all of the works that are flooding the market come directly (and recently) from China, which appears to be using America for a dumping ground for art objects it doesn't want.

To understand just how much art that experts characterize as second-rate is on the market, consider the works in the department stores—all the Bloomingdale's outlets, B. Altman's, Bullock's, and many others. The antique

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Chinese art causes problems even for New York's Metropolitan museum: Its 11th-century scroll, "Summer Mountains," was first attributed to Yen Wen-kuei; now it is said to be by Ch'u Ting.

porcelains that fill their display cases are recently imported from China, and all date from around the same period in history—the second half of the 19th century. And if all the department stores sold out their entire stock today, they could easily refill their display cases with almost identical pieces tomorrow.

In desperate need of foreign currency, the People's Republic is actually selling whole warehouses full of porcelains to the West, particularly the United States. These antiques are indeed antiques; they meet our legal definition, which is based solely on age. But value in art is also based on scarcity and aesthetic qualities, and these works have neither. The Chinese regard them as having the artistic interest of Tupperware. The only value these works have to the Chinese is, in fact, an export value.

How did they come to have warehouses full of art in the first place? During the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese attempted to obliterate their own history, and leaders called on people to turn in relics of the past. Millions of Chinese complied, and heaps of porcelain, most of it from the late 19th century, were placed in warehouses. Not all of these pieces were devoid of collector interest, but most were. Then, after the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese discovered that they could sell it all to the West. They began tagging pieces with red "antique" stickers and sold them mostly by the caseload to large importers. Any dealers who wanted to inspect the cases to pick out the best pieces were politely told to take their business elsewhere. Says Colin Sheaf of Christie's: "The Chinese had plenty of people queuing up to buy rooms full of routine, commercial material." And they're still lining up.

These pieces can be pleasant enough decorations, but there's nothing special about them. At $50, maybe even $100 for some of them, they might make nice ornaments to put on a shelf. Yet right now, some pieces are being offered for $2,500 and more.

Many Americans are buying the same sort of pieces in China. One collector came back from a trip bragging about a collection of porcelains he said cost him only $250,000. He was crestfallen to hear Christie's estimate of its auction value: about $50,000!

The truth is, China is selling very few artworks of high quality there or here. The few exceptions are occasional modern Chinese paintings (though most modern paintings they sell are mediocre, too; many were ordered by the government to be mass produced for sale to foreign visitors). But fine pieces are priced almost beyond imagination. Paintings by Fu Baoshi, for instance, reportedly sell for $100,000 or more in China—$64,000 more than the auction record here.

A genuine Fu Baoshi or any other Chinese masterwork may, of course, be worth $100,000 in the U.S. before long. But the Chinese art market is confused further by another major problem: A great number of works are of questionable authenticity. And most cannot be proven *either* fake or authentic.

When pressed, few people will be able to produce a definite fake or even a picture of one. A month of wide-ranging inquiries produced only two dealers who could identify a specific fake that had been sold as an original and, even then, they had no absolute proof; they only were stating opinions. What bolstered their claims, however, was that they both independently identified the same work—a painting allegedly by a modern master that sold in Hong Kong for $28,000. They both stated that it was a copy painted by a man on Taiwan who owns the original. Each produced a picture of it and each indicated stylistic peculiarities that gave the painting away. But neither was willing to say any of this for the record.

The experts aren't being evasive. They just don't have proof, and sometimes proof doesn't exist. Some kinds of Chinese art can be authenticated with a high degree of accuracy: Ancient pottery and bronzes can be carbon-

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METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

dated, and textile dyes changed in the 19th century so dating some fine textiles isn't difficult either. But porcelains are much harder to authenticate, and *Arts of Asia*, a Hong Kong publication, recently noted how "unscrupulous dealers" were taking exquisite and unmarked reproductions made by the China Art Ceramic Co. on Taiwan and artificially aging them with chemicals. The results were fooling the experts.

But the hardest of all to authenticate are Chinese paintings. In fact, Sotheby's has on occasion changed attributions or withdrawn paintings entirely moments before bidding began as a result of last-minute protests from collectors and experts. During a sale of 74 paintings in 1976, for example, Sotheby's withdrew seven and changed the attributions on seven others at the last minute. Changes have occurred in more recent auctions as well. The giant auction house refuses to guarantee any artist attribution on Chinese paintings though it will do so on Western paintings. The authentication problems are considered too sticky. In fact, the absence of a guarantee is something that experienced collectors, to some extent, accept and understand. Notes one: "When you buy a Chinese painting you can't ever be more than 90 percent certain of its authenticity unless you saw the painter do it."

There are several reasons why verification of paintings is so difficult. First, there is a long tradition of copying in Chinese art. As a rule, the copying isn't meant as a form of fraud; rather it's an act of respect to a teacher or a classic master. But it means that copies are everywhere. Some are hundreds of years old. "You'll find," says Becky Jones of Sotheby's, "11th-century copies of 9th-century paintings." But old or not, homage or not, they're still fakes.

Copying is also a traditional Chinese method of teaching art. Notes New York dealer Scott Jordan: "A painter will start a class by hanging one of his works on the wall and telling his class to reproduce it." In Chinese art, where great value is placed on learning traditional styles and forms, it is considered a sign of achievement for a student to be able to produce very close copies of works by teachers and masters. But since students may sign the masters' names to their own copies, a copy can very easily become a "masterwork" once it gets out into the marketplace. Experts might suspect it's a phony but they probably couldn't prove it.

Ultimately, says Sotheby's Becky Jones, "the question of authenticity in Chinese painting comes down to opinion and whose you're going to listen to." The amount of disagreement among scholars is often startling. In 1962, 69 experts and students gathered to consider 14 works from the Taiwan Palace Museum. In the end, they couldn't reach unanimous agreement about the origins and authenticity of any one of them!

Clearly, then, it's not only American bargain hunters who get stuck with dubious pieces. In fact, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has probably made more questionable acquisitions than anyone or anyplace. In 1947, it spent $300,000 on Chinese paintings that were roundly criticized by experts. Twenty-six years later, it poured out $2.5 million for paintings that again produced authenticity questions. Then just last year it purchased a 14th-century handscroll bearing the signa-

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ALAN SCOTT JORDAN

In Peking, a worker at the Rong Bao Zhai studio adds "authentic" brush strokes to a woodblock print of a painting by the 19th- and 20th-century artist Wu Changshi whose originals are extremely valuable. Even experts have difficulty differentiating between a Rong Bao Zhai copy and an original.

ture of master Wang Zhenpeng at a Sotheby's auction for $55,000. Sotheby's refused to make a definite attribution; the Met will. Is it likely that it's a genuine Wang Zhenpeng? According to Paula Gasparello: "The Met has a good argument"—but that's not proof.

Any collector stuck with a likely fake might be tempted to try to track down and expose whoever fobbed it off as an original. But that's usually very difficult. Old fakes may have been around for a thousand years, and no one could possibly find out who started it all. But even with modern fakes, notes Paula Gasparello, "It's very hard to track down the routing of certain pieces." They might have been smuggled out of China five, 10, 15 years ago, and who smuggled them out? No one will say.

Even when a source of fakes is found, the source itself might not be guilty of the fraud. Prints made by the Rong Bao Zhai studio in Peking, for instance, are said by Scott Jordan to be so convincing that they've fooled "major experts," and many are believed to be circulating here as originals. But no one is saying that Rong Bao Zhai is selling its work as anything other than copies.

Despite the confusions of the market, it's still possible to acquire fine Chinese art. But collectors—especially American collectors—need education. However intriguing and chic China is, its art comes from a tradition vastly different from our own. Our tradition encourages individuality. We regard progress as synonymous with change and expect our artists to make major innovations. In the Chinese tradition where old forms and styles are revered, change comes slowly, and one artist's individuality may be expressed with extreme subtlety, almost imperceptibly. Westerners today probably can never understand and appreciate Chinese art the way the Chinese do. But a Westerner who appreciates the manner, spirit, and philosophy of Chinese art will not only enjoy it more, but will also be better able to recognize quality—or the lack of it—in any work. Such knowledge would keep a lot of people from becoming patsies in the wild Chinese art market. ■

COURTESY SOTHEBY PARKE BERNET

A market in turmoil: Zhang Daqian's "Scholar Contemplating Lotus" (left) sold for $28,000 in Hong Kong last year—but collectors bid only $225 for his "Lotus" (right) in New York and it went unsold.

Peter Z. Grossman is a professor of journalism at Polytechnic Institute of New York and a Chinese art collector.

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Philip Roth

Still Waiting for His Masterpiece

by Henry Weil

At the end of our last episode (a novel called *The Ghost Writer*), Philip Roth's writer-hero, Nathan Zuckerman, was facing a dilemma. At the age of 23, with a brilliant career opening up before him, Zuckerman could follow one of two roads: He could become a celebrity, traveling the world first-class, clutching a movie star with one hand, gathering royalty checks with the other; or he could retreat into the woods, living in asocial obscurity, earning respect by not currying it.

Zuckerman saw that either life brought pain to other people. The celebrity-author wrote about his experiences, describing his life and his friends, exposing, betraying, and humiliating everyone he touched. The recluse-author deprived himself of experiences in order to retreat into an idiosyncratic fantasy life. But social renunciation robbed those he touched of normal human contact, allowing them to feel only a restricted and emotionless relationship. The artist's life, in short, inevitably caused pain, so the only question was: Which variety would Zuckerman choose to inflict?

In Philip Roth's new novel, *Zuckerman Unbound* (published this month by Farrar, Straus & Giroux), Zuckerman has made his choice: He will play the celebrity, he will refuse to acknowledge any responsibility for wounds caused by his art. Instead, he will revel in the perquisites of success.

The perquisites are substantial. His face is recognized with pleasure by everyone on a Manhattan bus. He earns $1 million from the sale of a single book. He moves to a swanky apartment, buys new suits handmade by Nelson Rockefeller's tailor (this is 1969), and sleeps with a knockout movie star. ("Staggering to see that face coming up at his. It was like kissing a billboard.")

But at the same time, Zuckerman finds everyone wants something from him. Strangers beg him to find a publisher for their manuscripts. Literary groupies want to notch him on their revolvers. Reporters and documentary filmmakers want to observe every detail of his daily routine. A family friend insists Zuckerman is honor-bound by his new status to serve as his parents' "mouthpiece."

In fending off the world, Zuckerman finds himself fending off his family as well. At the end of the novel, he can't speak of love to his dying father, only of theories about the universe. His stroke-crippled father manages to say one final word: He calls Zuckerman a bastard, then he dies.

At last, Zuckerman feels truly free.

It is impossible to read *Zuckerman Unbound* and not see it as richly autobiographical. Both Roth and Zuckerman were born in the Thirties (Roth, 1933) and raised on Leslie Street in the Weequahic neighborhood of Newark, New Jersey. Each has one brother (though Roth's is older; Zuckerman's is younger); each went off to the University of Chicago (Roth for an MA; Zuckerman for his BA); each served in the army (Zuckerman for two years; Roth's stint was cut short by a back injury); and each first achieved success in his twenties writing about the world he had grown up in, among Jews trying to find security in an untrustworthy Gentile world.

Roth's first collection of stories, *Goodbye Columbus*, was published in 1960 when he was 27. The critics praised it. It won a National Book Award. And even though it was accused of slanderous hostility to Jews, it was chosen by the Jewish Book Council of the National Jewish Welfare Board as the year's outstanding work of fiction relating to Jewish interests.

Roth's next two books, *Letting Go* (1962) and *When She Was Good* (1967), were less well received. But his fourth book, *Portnoy's Complaint* (published, like Zuckerman's blockbuster, *Carnovsky*, in 1969), solidified his reputation. Before it had even reached the bookstores, it earned Roth nearly $1 million from sales of the rights to a first printing, a paperback reprint, and a movie version (sold to 20th Century-Fox). *Portnoy* was applauded for its wit, its brilliant writing, its courage—the book discussed masturbation and oral sex at a time when such topics could still raise blushes. Critics

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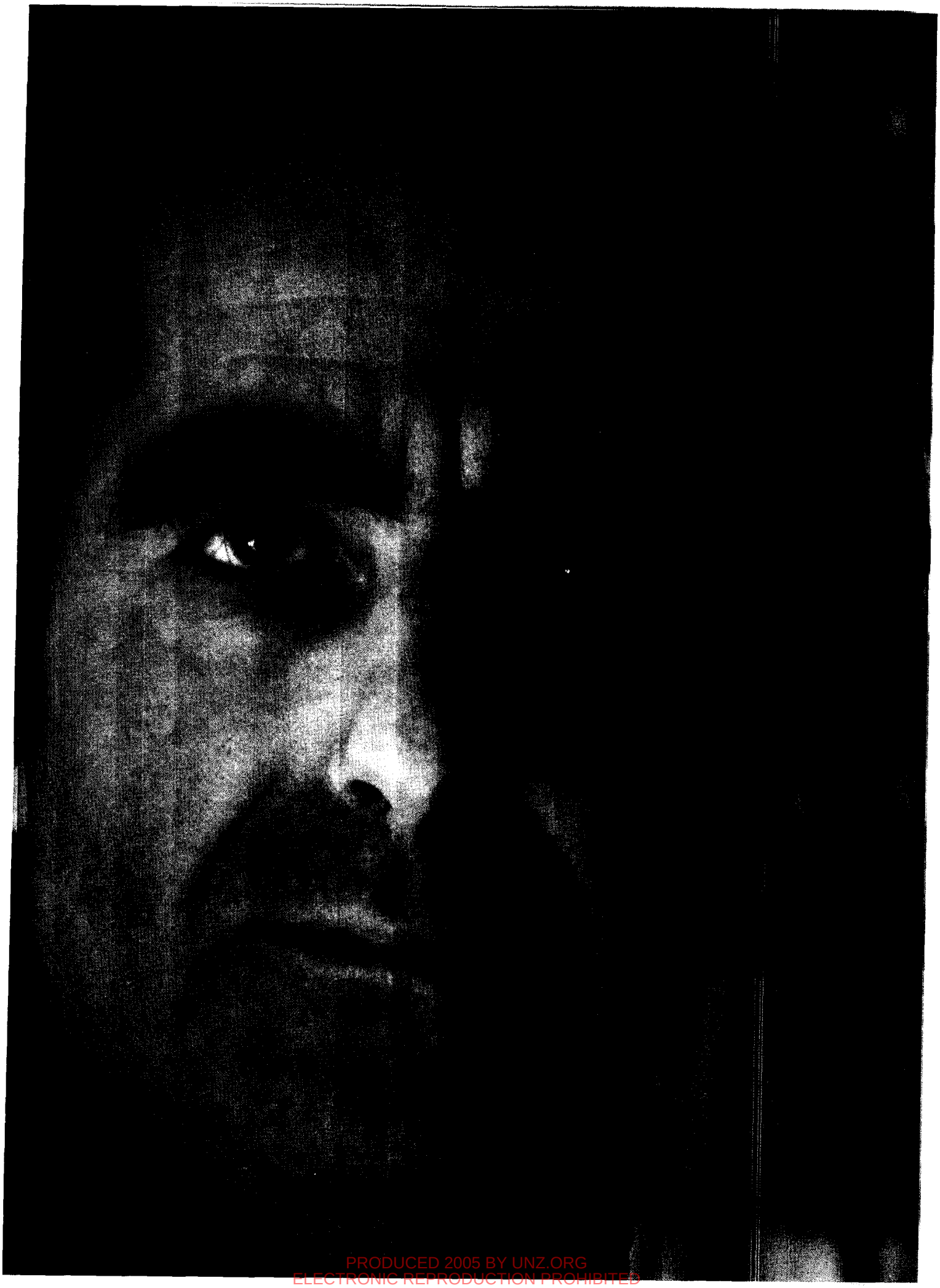

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bracketed Roth with Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud (as "the Hart Schaffner and Marx of American letters," quipped Bellow), and he was elected to membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Like *Portnoy*, Zuckerman's fourth book, *Carnovsky*, celebrates masturbation, earns the author $1 million, is hailed as a masterwork—and is condemned for caricaturing and reviling Jews. Zuckerman receives a letter: "For depicting Jews in a peep show atmosphere of total perversion, for depicting Jews in acts of adultery, exhibitionism, masturbation, sodomy, fetishism, and whoremongery ... [you] ought to be shot." Another begins: "Dear Mr. Zuckerman: This letter is written in memory of those who suffered the horror of the Concentration Camps...."

Roth has been receiving similar abuse ever since his first short story was published in *The New Yorker* when he was 23. Of *Portnoy's Complaint*, for example, a critic wrote in *Commentary* that when Portnoy introduces his WASP girl friend to oral sex, it's "a classic description of what the Nazis called *rassenschande* (racial defilement) ... straight out of the Goebbels-Streicher script...." Roth keeps a copy of that review in his files.

Controversial success makes both Zuckerman and Roth paranoid. Zuckerman sees himself stalked by assassins. As for Roth, according to his friend, writer Albert Goldman, "Long before the Kennedys were assassinated, he's been waiting for the bullet." At the time *Portnoy* first burst on the scene, Goldman wrote a profile of Roth that showed the writer clowning loudly in a coffee shop while bystanders gaped. Roth rattled off Borscht Belt comedy shtick, impersonating well-known personalities and character stereotypes. "He's the most brilliant, gifted mimic I've ever seen," says another literary friend, writer Francine du Plessix Gray. But since the days of his acclaim for *Portnoy*, Roth saves his routines for private evenings, feeling less vulnerable if he keeps a low public profile.

Nonetheless, there are differences between Roth and Zuckerman. Zuckerman, in fact, complains that his fans "had mistaken impersonation for confession," and Roth can make that charge as well. Says Roth's longtime

Roth Unbound

by Richard Stern

One of Philip Roth's longstanding friends from his University of Chicago days is novelist Richard Stern (In Any Case—*recently reissued as* The Chaleur Network—Other Men's Daughters, Natural Shocks *and, most recently,* Packages). *Stern is a frequent guest at Roth's Connecticut retreat, and he offers the following impressions of Roth on his home turf:*

"Roth."

"Schtoin."

"I took the wrong turn-off."

Every other year, I miss it. Roth is patient with his pals' lesser idiocies. For those out-and-out fools, and the laser-brained fanatics around whom his art puts bars, he's positively hungry. They're out there *living* (living: that heap of groans and gestures out of which he has to make sense).

Finally, the river, the village, the hill, the turn-off into Connecticut forest, the flat rocks, the right turn, and the beautiful double house, the 18th-century barn with its steps into the kitchen stocked for a gourmet siege. If you're one of the regulars, you get told—instead of shown—which upstairs room you're in. You pass the comic posters of the host: submarine-nosed, thimblehead, leaking a few black wires (done by his late pal, artist Philip Guston). By your bed, a pile of new books. Out of the window, lawns, apple trees, a hay field, the hostess—more beautiful than the pictures that have celebrated her since her teenage Juliet and debut with Chaplin—hanging the wash. She'll be driving to get the night's vegetables and returning for 40 laps in the pool.

Sometimes there's another house guest sure to be someone who's read and been around enough not to drop too many stitches (most of which will be in your side).

This is no vacation retreat. It's a house in which vocation and vacation fuse. The whole point is there's no vacation. Not that the atmosphere doesn't alter when a book's being started instead of finished or a play's getting prepared rather than recovered from. But Roth and Bloom, to give the hosts their names, don't store their heads with their winter clothes. They're in—as Roth says—"the same line of

Philip Roth (left) and Richard Stern at Roth's Connecticut estate.

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work," depicting human beings clearly, forcefully, and beautifully.

You don't feel inspected here, though in a house of observers, there's a certain kind of sport about this matter. Now and then something's said or a trait you thought you'd concealed shows up on a page (or a stage). "I didn't know my head was that small."

"It's not *your* pinhead. It's mine."

People *are* noticed here, but not by reporters. This is a house of fiction-makers. Human beings in and out of the house, in and out of books, are analyzed, magnified, felt with and against so that more interesting ones can get invented. During the day, everyone's at a different typewriter; groans over misplaced commas are bouncing off every wall. We assemble at meals, breakfast and lunch at the kitchen table, Roth and Bloom squeezing oranges, cutting bread, pouring coffee. In late afternoon, it's the pool under birch trees, the trim hostess keeping trim, the rest of us on lounge chairs between the smoking insect-repellers. There may be a wrap-up seminar on the misplaced commas or a homemade routine: Roth as Olivier's Othello—"'Now doan you say dat, Yago man, Ah doan *wanna* ring dat lil' hawnky's naik'"—Bloom digging Blanche DuBois out of Desdemona.

Dinner, candle-lit and silvery, is at the table in the barn. The hostess, who's cooked it—unless the host has barbecued something—is in a long dress like some queen's dream of herself. Art doesn't stop at the typewriter here. There's no snorting down burgers and Kool-Aid.

Now and then guests come from around the county or New York. Most are artists (playwrights, musicians, actors, sculptors, poets), people who know what it is to spend life amusing, exciting, judging, and deepening the lives of lots of other people. There's usually one conversational star per evening, seldom the same—though Roth, with a little booze in him, is hard to stop. Or rather, one wants him never to stop. There's a gas shortage, the local gas station *gauleiters* are rendered to the wart; then the customers get theirs, tanks and bodies open to the pump, mouths and rear-ends leaking repletion, the scatalogical aria spins, frantic, wild, the diction lit with genial mania. Someone breaks in, there's another tack and *whoosh,* Paganini's whirling again.

The guests are off for their own beautiful acres, the home folk move to the living room for Vivaldi or *Guys and Dolls,* for a final drink and a post-mortem. Or we slide back to the day's work, ten minutes become fifty, a hundred. How to get X to Y, how Conrad would do it, where James muffed it. Or where we are, what we were back in Chicago 25 years ago, what we're about now, what it's all about. Sometimes, despite fatigue, invention: How about this, how about that. The book's in the air, for a time it only belongs to itself, it's trying to get made, it doesn't matter who feeds it.

Last summer it was *Zuckerman Unbound.* Roth: "To the woodshed." His workplace, two rooms across the lawn from the main house, desk, chair, couch, a picture of Kafka, the great Czech *alter ego,* black eyes lighting up the earth. Roth cushions his troubled back, gets out the yellow pad. "Go."

"You've messed it. The book belongs to Pepler, not the brother."

Roth writes. "More."

Speech, debate, excitement, analysis, invention, the yellow pad fills. Fifty, sixty, a hundred murderous minutes. "Don't stop. Keep going. Suppose *Pepler*'s the kidnapper?"

Finally, I get out. Roth stays.

Like the great writer on the wall, he is deeply a writer. And like him also, a son, deeply, a brother, a friend—the best—a lover, a citizen and, with heavy decision, not a father. Above, beneath, and through all, a writer (whose chief subject is that). Not for self-fingering narcissism though. If anything, there's the special modesty of high intelligence, ever surer of what it can and can't do.

Eight months later, the galleys arrive. Roth, in the middle of his half-year in London—the *social* part of his life—has somehow done it again. You can hardly spot a seam—who would have guessed the pounding it took?—though that's the book's subject.

"It's simple," said Michelangelo. "Just hammer off everything that doesn't belong on the sculpture."

Or, for Roth, a more fitting quotation from one of his hundred favorite writers: "The majority of men are subjective toward themselves and objective toward all others, terribly objective sometimes—but the real task is to be objective toward oneself and subjective toward all others." Kierkegaard, *Journals.* ■

editor, Aaron Asher, "Roth is playfully interested in being accurate to some details in his life. But there's no one-to-one correlation. His stories are a combination of invention and experience —which is true for all novelists." Adds Goldman, "He's always flashing and concealing at the same time. Roth reveals a little bit but he hides a whole lot more. By the time he's written 14 drafts, there's *nothing* that is frankly autobiographical in the books."

Further, *Portnoy*'s phenomenal success came on the heels of two momentous events in Roth's life: He had recently recovered from a ruptured appendix that nearly killed him; and his ex-wife had just died in an automobile accident (Roth has been divorced once; Zuckerman three times). Nothing of such emotional consequence prior to the success of *Carnovsky* is even hinted at in *Zuckerman Unbound.*

Perhaps most disparately, the humiliation of being lampooned in *Carnovsky* gives Zuckerman's father the stroke that kills him. But the humiliation of being lampooned in *Portnoy's Complaint*, say Roth's parents, delighted them. "In Jewish society," explains Goldman, "success is success. I never heard a word about the father being anything but pleased." (In *Zuckerman Unbound*, however, Roth himself casts doubt on all such statements by showing Zuckerman carefully coaching his parents to say nothing publicly except that they are delighted at their son's success, thank you very much. Unlike Zuckerman's father, Roth's father is still alive, but after reading *Zuckerman* one can't be sure whether his parents are truly pleased or displeased: Clearly there are many ways to die from character assassination.)

Zuckerman, in short, is not utterly autobiographical. And, in fact, Roth's own life seems to refute the choice he posed for Zuckerman in *The Ghost Writer.* Roth, it turns out, lives as both a recluse *and* a celebrity. For six months of the year, he lives on a secluded estate in Connecticut, writing in the morning, walking in the afternoon, reading at night. But he invites friends in for warm, sociable visits, teaches one semester each year at the University of Pennsylvania, and travels in Europe a good deal with actress

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Claire Bloom, his constant companion since 1976.

Nor does he try to excuse his success. His walls in Connecticut are hung with framed, poster-sized blowups of his book jackets. And when a reporter from the *New York Times* dropped in once for an "elegant luncheon of cold veal," Roth asked him: "What'd Updike give you, a Big Mac?"

This is not to say that Roth is eager for public display. Moreover, he expects friends to protect his privacy. Says Francine Gray, "He's a loyal, dedicated friend. One offers protection for him in return for that loyalty, in gratitude for his integrity." Adds another friend pointedly, "Any discussion *about* Philip is subject to retribution *from* Philip."

When Roth grants an interview at a New York City hotel, he is personally reticent, preferring to discuss other writers (Czech author Milan Kundera; Austrian novelist Robert Musil whose *Man Without Qualities* is "the most intelligent book I've ever read") rather than talk about his life or his work. Indeed, a stranger learns more about the way Roth lives by looking around the room than by talking to him: Claire Bloom, for instance, on her way out the door to go shopping with actress Irene Worth; a pile of books including art catalogues, a study of Thomas Hardy, and a script for *The Cherry Orchard*; and several half-bottles of expensive Bordeaux.

If Roth is protective of himself and his work, it is not without reason. His books following *Portnoy*—including among others, *The Breast* (1972), *The Great American Novel* (1973), *My Life as a Man* (1974), and *The Professor of Desire* (1977)—were widely judged to be stylistically brilliant but substantively shallow, the work of an aging prodigy betraying his early promise. Most critics saluted *The Ghost Writer* (1979) as a rediscovery of his old powers, his best effort since *Portnoy*. *Zuckerman Unbound*, if successful, could confirm this reviving repute.

Is *Zuckerman Unbound* a success? The answer, unfortunately, is no. What Roth has always done well, he does as scintillatingly as ever. His dialogue rings true; his prose is crystalline. His talent for the outrageous flourish is as devastating as ever: A Broadway producer named Marty Paté is reported to have an option on the Israel-Egypt Six Day War to produce it as a musical starring Yul Brynner as Moshe Dayan; Zuckerman's movie star-lover throws him over because Fidel Castro can't go on without her. If nothing else, *Zuckerman Unbound* is dependably funny.

As deftly as any other writer, Roth can also capture a sense of psychic claustrophobia, the feeling of being trapped because one is a member of a family, or a success, or a Jew. Perfect strangers, as well as unloved relatives, presume that they understand Zuckerman, that he in turn will be automatically sympathetic to them and will feel indebted because of a label someone else has affixed to him. "As we're *landsmen* . . . ," a perfect stranger says, approaching him freely. In *The Ghost Writer*, Roth quoted Anne Frank's diary despairingly: "The time will come when we are people again, not just Jews."

But *Zuckerman Unbound* fails ultimately, and Roth seems aware of its

The charge: Roth ridicules Jews. Exhibit A: a Jewish wedding as portrayed in the fi

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failings because he puts criticisms of them into the mouths of crackpots and psychopaths, dismissing and lampooning such cavils. A crazed extortionist over the telephone summarizes Zuckerman's work: "Flash, yes; depth, no." An obnoxious, omnipresent leech shows Zuckerman a book review that accuses the famous author of writing veiled autobiography out of "an urge to justify the author's ways to men...." Zuckerman (and seemingly Roth as well) dismisses this charge as too trite and simplistic to merit response.

ersion of *Goodbye Columbus* (1969).

Further, the book is a catalogue of the unpleasantness that can accompany success. Even Zuckerman acknowledges that it's tasteless and ungrateful to lament such woes to the very people (one's readers) who have bestowed that success. "Being a poor misunderstood millionaire," says Zuckerman, "is not really a topic that intelligent people can discuss for very long." Roth, in short, is aware of many sins. But the act of acknowledging one's errors does not excuse them.

Roth understands *Zuckerman Unbound*'s chief failing as well. Ever since *Goodbye Columbus*, he has been writing about the intolerability, the impossibility of a life committed to satisfying the demands of others. And he has shown that he is well aware of the pain writing can cause. Zuckerman analyzes himself as: "coldhearted betrayer of the most intimate confessions, cutthroat caricaturist of your own loving parents, graphic reporter of encounters with women to whom you have been deeply bound by trust, by sex, by love...."

Zuckerman, however, is more than a mere traitor in the name of art. He cannot acknowledge any sympathy or even respect for his past, his heritage, his father. His father dies and Zuckerman's brother is devastated. Zuckerman, meanwhile, feels liberated: "He was no longer any man's son." The novel ends with Zuckerman being chauffeured through his old Newark neighborhood. The driver is armed with a .38, prepared to blast into oblivion any relic of Zuckerman's past that dares approach the limousine.

Can one's history be so easily cast off and dismissed? Does success liberate the present from claims of the past? Freud convinced us that we never entirely escape our roots; psychoanalysis continues to teach that it is possible to live with guilts and memories but never possible to escape from them. Yet Roth shows Zuckerman declaring his liberation with no indication that the perception is wrong.

After their father's funeral, Zuckerman's brother accuses him: "What does responsibility mean to you? To you everything is disposable!... Everything is grist for your fun-machine.... You killed him, Nathan.... He died in misery ....You and your 'liberating' book! Do you really think that conscience is a Jewish invention from which you are immune?" Zuckerman makes no response to this charge at all.

Does Roth feel Zuckerman's brother has a point? In his Manhattan hotel room, at last discussing the book, Roth reluctantly answers no, that Zuckerman makes a mistake hearing the brother out: "It may be silly for the man who's being charged to bother about the charge at all. These struggles aren't alive any longer [for Zuckerman]. These are the terms of a struggle that's *been*. It's over, and he goes on unencumbered."

But if such struggles are indeed resolvable, why is Roth still writing about the (supposedly invalid) claims of the past on the present after 12 books? If Roth himself has passed beyond this question, why does it still nag at him until it has provoked yet another novel after a quarter century of writing?

Finishing *Zuckerman Unbound*, the reader feels that Zuckerman—and Roth, too, if he believes what he says—is, well ... a bull in a china shop. He's marvelous at describing the way a Lalique vase splinters at the flick of the hero's tail, at the way blood seeps from a gash ripped open by a frolicking horn. And when the rampaging beast moves on, we're left with an indelible image of shattered crystal and jagged wounds—but the bull has disappeared. He was the hero, the focus of our attention and suddenly he has vanished. The nature of Zuckerman's deepest inner response (and Roth's, too, one feels) is hidden from the reader; the questions are asked, but the glib answer Roth offers is inadequate.

It is unfair, perhaps, to demand that an artist eviscerate his psyche for our entertainment and edification. It's one of those claims on the artist that Roth argues a stranger has no right to make. And in fact, Roth's next novel will follow Zuckerman to Europe, so perhaps the issue is far from settled. Perhaps *Zuckerman Unbound* is a chapter in a saga that will ultimately ring true and resound deeply once it is completed. Given only this novel, however, the reader feels like an accessory to the ridiculed extortionist who laments, "Flash, yes; depth, no." ■

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CULTURAL EXCURSIONS

Caribbean Arts

No one who has been there, no one who has walked the empty sands at Grande Anse in Guadeloupe or heeled into the wind in the Grenadines, can deny the fleshly pleasures of the Caribbean. And yet sun and sailing, beaches and baccarat should not define that 1,500-mile arc of islands from Havana harbor to the edge of Venezuela. There is a more substantial world to be explored down there, more cerebral, more soulful, but no less entrancing. It has to do with the Caribbean islanders themselves and how they live. It has to do with the languages and dialects they speak, with the cities they began to build centuries ago and undertook to rebuild before historic preservation was a commonplace. It has to do with their painting and weaving, their food and drink, and of course it has to do with their music and dance. Nothing defines the Caribbean world as strikingly as those special steps and sounds—the conga, the pachanga, the merengue, reggae, which came out of the back streets of Kingston a few years ago to sweep the West Indies and the world, and the limbo.

In the pieces that follow, you will learn not only about the dance of the sunny lands and islands south of the United States, but also about other

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attractions that make the Caribbean an enticement to the culture lover as well as the sun-worshipper. *SR* dance critic Walter Terry reports on the state of music and dance in the Caribbean and their truest expression—the fêtes and festivals ready to explode in the summer months ahead.

If the islands have a special allure between April and December, it is not only because the hotel and airline prices are 25 to 40 percent lower, but because the islanders themselves, free of winter tourist pressures, uncork some of their most inspired performances—Bastille Day in the French islands, the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico, Independence Day in St. Vincent, Jamaica, and elsewhere, Carnival in Grenada, where for the first time this year the ordinarily pre-Lenten festival will be celebrated in August. There are a multitude of other cultural enticements, as David Butwin sets down in the second piece—the thick-walled colonial quarters of San Juan and Santo Domingo, the native art and voodoo of Haiti, the great houses of Jamaica, the spice factories of Grenada. These and other reasons make the Caribbean a compelling and variegated world, and one that will be hard to pass up in the reasonable months ahead.

A Dance Lover's Holiday

by Walter Terry

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

A trip to Trinidad offers the traveler a wide variety of dance experiences. The French, when they came to Trinidad with contingents of slaves, brought with them the vivacious and elegant dances of the ballroom. The slaves, copying the dress, courtly etiquette, and dance of their masters, added African drums and a touch of African costume to their own versions. Laborers from India arrived in Trinidad during the last century, bringing with them both Hindu and Moslem rites and dances. Today, African and Indian drummers may join together to accompany dances that mirror the ancient dance heritages of two vast continents, Asia and Africa.

During August and September, Trinidad and Tobago offer a multi-community contest called the Prime Minister's Best Village Competition. Painting, sculpture, crafts, and music, reflecting all the ethnic heritages, are entered by each village, but it is the dancing that for most tourists represents the high point in these festivities. In November, among other dance events, comes Divali, the Hindu Festival of Lights. But the dance follower may also attend performances by the world-traveling Trinidad Folk Performing Company directed by Aubrey Adams, which annually offers a new edition of its unique production, Ambakaila—this year Ambakaila '81.

In Haiti, you'll find ballet academies, folkloric troupes—and, from time to time, just plain dancing in the streets.

BARBADOS

The big event in Barbados is Carifesta 1981, which runs from July 19 to August 3. This is the fourth Carifesta—the first was held in Guyana in 1972, the second in Jamaica in 1976, the third in Cuba in 1979—and for this occasion 33 countries will take part in a festival of fine arts that celebrates "living images of regional identity, ethnic heritage, and native aspiration." The opening events will be held in the Barbados National Stadium, dance festivals will be continuously spotted throughout the Carifesta season, and for the finale all of the dancing visitors, host dancers, and musicians will take to the streets of Bridgetown for a parade of revelers.

VENEZUELA

For those who prefer their ballet more *clasico*, Venezuela boasts a brand-new classical troupe, the Ballet of the Teresa Carreño Foundation (Fundación Ter-

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esa Carreño) directed by Rodolfo Rodriguez, once associated with Alicia Alonso and her Ballet Nacional de Cuba and the Colón Opera in Buenos Aires. The Venezuelan company, in rehearsal during the summer months, performs not only in opera ballets in the Teatro Municipal in Caracas but also in such full-length ballet classics as *Swan Lake* and *Giselle*. Venezuela also offers the Contemporary Chamber Ballet of Caracas that will be performing in Caracas, Maracaibo, and Maracay this month.

JAMAICA

Jamaica always celebrates its Independence Day with a big festival; so if the tourist is on the island August 3, he will find dance celebrations everywhere. For those who would like to participate informally, or view the activities knowledgeably, the Jamaica School of Dance offers classes July 6 through 26. There will be daily instruction in Caribbean dances, classical ballet, and modern dance under the direction of John Johns and the remarkable Lavinia Williams, a one-time principal dancer in the companies of Katherine Dunham and a featured Broadway performer.

HAITI

From August 15 through September 5, Lavinia Williams will be in Haiti, the nearest home-away-from-home she knows. Here she joins other faculty members in special master classes in Caribbean dance at the Régine-Montrosier Trouillot Ballet Academy in Port-au-Prince. If plans are not interrupted by another blow, such as the devastation Hurricane Allen visited on the island nation and from which it is still recovering, the great new National Theater of Haiti will open November 22 with Jean-Léon Destiné as its artistic director. Destiné, who founded in 1950 the still functioning Troupe Folklorique Nationale d'Haiti, will be on hand to choreograph the event and to direct the programming of a celebration that will feature dance, music, and theater groups from the other islands.

PUERTO RICO

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico inaugurated its new Centro de Bellas Artes in Santurce (San Juan) on April 9 this year. The complex includes a festival hall with 2,345 seats, a drama hall with 802, and an experimental hall with 214. Still in the planning stage for what is now the largest theater in the Caribbean is Puerto Rico's 18th International Theater Festival scheduled for November. Four dance groups will participate, among them the classical Ballet de San Juan, directed by Ana Garcia. It is very possible that Rudolf Nureyev will appear with the Ballet de San Juan at the new theater in August, and it is certain that the American Ballet Theatre star Fernando Bujones will dance there in November with the company.

A Portfolio of Pleasures

by David Butwin

PUERTO RICO

Nowhere in the hemisphere is there a grander chunk of urban restoration than in the seven-by-seven blocks of Old San Juan. By the mid-Fifties, though, the 16th-century walled section —having survived Sir Francis Drake's brief tenancy, a Dutch incursion, and a Spanish-American War shelling—had become a crumbling colonial ghetto. What the Institute of Culture has wrought since then can best be grasped on a walk about this district. Start at the institute's headquarters, a restored Dominican convent. On a hot, breezy winter morning, string music drifts through the convent's patio. Young students are strumming on *cuatros*, the small, high-pitched guitars that came to Puerto Rico 300 years ago and have lately experienced a revival across the island. As craftsmen rush to produce the instruments, the Institute of Culture —striving to promote the island's Puerto Rican-Spanish heritage— schedules *cuatro* and guitar concerts in major cities and remote villages.

Around the corner at Plaza de San José, cello music pours from a restored

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The Le-Lo-Lai Festival Dancers recreating traditional folk dances in Puerto Rico.

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colonial building. It is the Pablo Casals Museum, opened in 1977 to honor the late cellist who lived his final 17 years on the island directing the annual Casals Festival (June 6 through 16 this year). Inside you may sit in plush chairs and listen to televised, taped performances of any piece ever played at the festival.

Down a brick lane stands La Fortaleza, a onetime fortress that is now the governor's mansion, open for touring from 9 to 4:30 weekdays. Governor Romero Barcelo and his family may not always be about, but their dog Carriba overwhelms visitors with affection.

Three other important buildings in Old San Juan are San José Church, still undergoing a renovation; the Tapia Theater, a little jewel box recently restored to its 1830s contours; and Casa Blanca, originally built for Ponce de León (colonizer and first governor of Puerto Rico) and turned into a museum a dozen years back. Newer to Old San Juan is Plazoleta del Puerto, a municipal crafts center built around an airy courtyard where such things as hammocks, jewelry made from fish scales, hanging chairs of the local dark wood *caoba*, and rag dolls are produced and sold.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Colonial Santo Domingo is receiving an historic overhaul much like San Juan's, to the insistent belt of merengue. In the colonial quarter, wedged between the Caribbean Sea and the Ozama River, ancient stone buildings with mahogany plank doors are being converted to museums, shops, restaurants, hotels. Everywhere in old Santo Domingo, Columbus and his kin are remembered. At the Cathedral of Santa Maria la Menor you can see a crypt containing his remains (or so local historians claim; others say he is buried in Seville). Alcázar, the handsomely restored palace, was built for Columbus's son Diego. It was Columbus *père* after all who first sighted the island, naming it Hispaniola; his brother founded Santo Domingo, and died there. In the Museum of Royal Houses there are, among the sophisticated displays and objects, electronic maps of Columbus's voyages, his letters to Isabella, and a replica of an early pharmacy.

Hard by the U.S. Embassy in new Santo Domingo sprawls the Plaza de la Cultura, a sort of bougainvillea-draped Lincoln Center. Here stand the National Theater (which presents classical

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ballet, folkloric dances, jazz, plays), the Modern Art Museum, the Museum of Natural History, the National Library, and the Museum of the Dominican Man that displays the country's main collection of Taino Indian artifacts. East of Santo Domingo near Gulf & Western's resort Casa de Campo is a stunning new development, Altos de Chavon, which probably wouldn't resent being called the Williamsburg of the West Indies. G&W built this perfect copy of a Spanish colonial village to display native arts and crafts and to house artists, writers, musicians. The coral limestone buildings huddle above the Chavon River, home to painters, goldsmiths, and weavers as well as restaurants, a small inn, and a disco.

HAITI

Through all its economic troubles and political anguish, Haiti remains a highly productive marketplace for native art, unparalleled in the Caribbean basin. How extraordinary that the wave of creativity that has sent high-priced canvases to Madison Avenue galleries and Park Avenue penthouses in the last few decades was almost nonexistent before the mid-Forties. As recently as 1938, the anthropologist M.J. Herskovits regretted "the absence of graphic and plastic arts in Haitian culture." The quality has been diluted by elevated prices and the proliferation of mediocre work, but the movement still lives, and on the flanks of every rattling bus on the island are works of art. Two obligatory art stops in Port-au-Prince are the Centre d'Art and the Cathédrale Ste. Trinité. At the art center, established in the Forties by the late DeWitt Peters who helped found the Haitian art movement, you can be assured the pieces—paintings, iron sculpture, wood carvings—have been carefully screened and prices are fair.

The walls of the barnlike Ste. Trinité were painted by a half-dozen Haitian masters in the early Fifties, a project dreamed up by Selden Rodman, poet, anthologist, and art critic who has a gallery in the town of Jacmel. One of the muralists, 90-year-old Philome Obin, is very much alive and at work in his studio at Cap-Haïtien in the historic northern reaches of Haiti.

Three common subjects of Haitian art are voodoo, Noah's Ark, and Paradise. At a gallery in Pétionville, for example, I saw a vivid canvas by the Jacmel artist Wilmino Domond, his own version of the Garden of Eden: a green serpent handing a Haitian apple (a *pomme cajou*, or mahogany apple) to an Adam and Eve in fuzzy Afros. The painting cost $2,000, but there were tiny primitives for $25. Of course, the art of Haiti assaults you everywhere, not only in galleries and art centers. At the Grand Hotel Oloffson, whose West Indian gingerbread architecture makes it part of everyone's cultural tour, artists approach your dining table with arms full of canvases.

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The Caribbean's wildest Carnival takes place in Trinidad—the cradle of the calypso.

JAMAICA

Once there were 700 great plantation houses scattered across the green hills of Jamaica, testimony to King Sugar's importance in the 18th and 19th centuries. Only a half-dozen remain, and the best known is Rose Hall Great House, a meticulously restored mansion five miles east of Montego Bay with an eerie legend surrounding it. The house, built between 1770 and 1780 and in near ruin by the 1960s, has been redone with museum-piece perfection: door and window frames of rich Jamaican mahogany, walls covered with gray Scalamandré silk, etc. And yet certain details—an antique telescope pointing out to sea, toilet articles set out in the bedrooms—bring the house to life. On her 20-minute tour the guide is sure to recount the legend of Annee Palmer, the White Witch of Rose Hall, who led a mysterious, even murderous and sorcerous life behind the white stone walls before being strangled in her bed in 1831. The canopied bed in which she died—or at least an honest likeness of it—is the climax of the tour.

There are other great houses on view, each with its own appeal: Greenwood, 15 miles east of Montego Bay, said to have belonged to the family of Elizabeth Barrett Browning; Hope Estate in the hills behind Falmouth, with spectacular lawns and gardens; Sign Great House, a vine-shaded plantation manager's house from 1760, now a hotel and restaurant of attractive if uneven quality.

GRENADA

Flouting 2,000 years of religious history as only an independent Caribbean island can, Grenada has decided to move its Carnival celebration from the

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Lenten season to August 17 and 18 this year. One explanation is that Grenada has enough to celebrate in the spring with its own Independence Day; another is that it is seeking to avoid competition with all the other Carnival-observing islands. Anyway, the August fête—complete with steel bands, jump-up dancing in the streets, parades through St. George's—will come that much cheaper to visitors in the lower-fare summer season. St. George's is perhaps the prettiest port in the West Indies—pastel warehouses surrounding the perfect little harbor, gabled houses of red, white, and rainbow colors climbing the hillsides.

Grenada, the Spice Island, far down in the Windwards, blooms with cloves, nutmet, mace, cacao, allspice. At Douglaston Estates near the town of Gouyave you can tour a working and aromatic spice plantation.

TRINIDAD

This island, snug against the Venezuelan coast, may not be every escapist's dream, but there is an irresistible pull in the slightly mad mixture of races, nationalities, architectural styles, etc. In throbbing Port of Spain, East Indians live side by side with European expatriates, Arabian minarets with Victorian fretwork. If there is a unifying force, it is the music. Trinidad is the cradle of calypso, limbo, and steel bands, and you needn't be in town for Carnival—the Caribbean's wildest—to benefit. Calypso, those improvised African-based melodies in two-quarter and four-quarter, burst forth everywhere—in the four public halls, or "tents," of Port of Spain, on the beaches, in the hotels. Steel-band music can be traced to the Shango drums of African tribes, but the now-familiar sound didn't have its first public expression until V-E Day 1945 when the citizens of Port of Spain, taking up garbage-can covers and any other metal objects at hand, staged a victory parade through the streets. In a short time Trinidadians learned to control and refine the resonance of the metal instruments—oil drums, gas tanks, pots, pans, biscuit trays—and within a decade they were playing Bach sonatas and simple calypso tunes for the world to hear. ■

David Butwin is a freelance writer based in New York.

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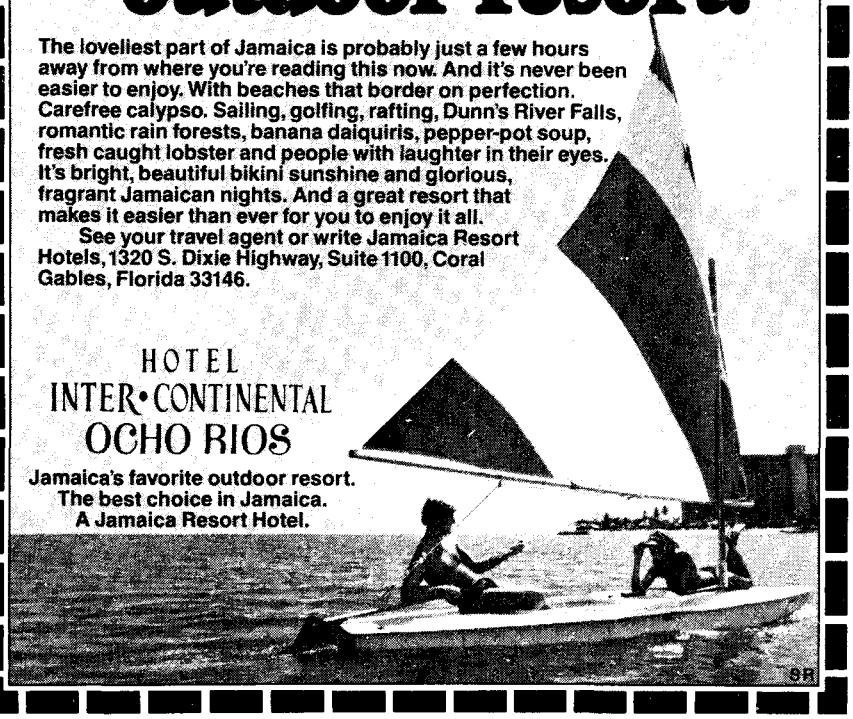

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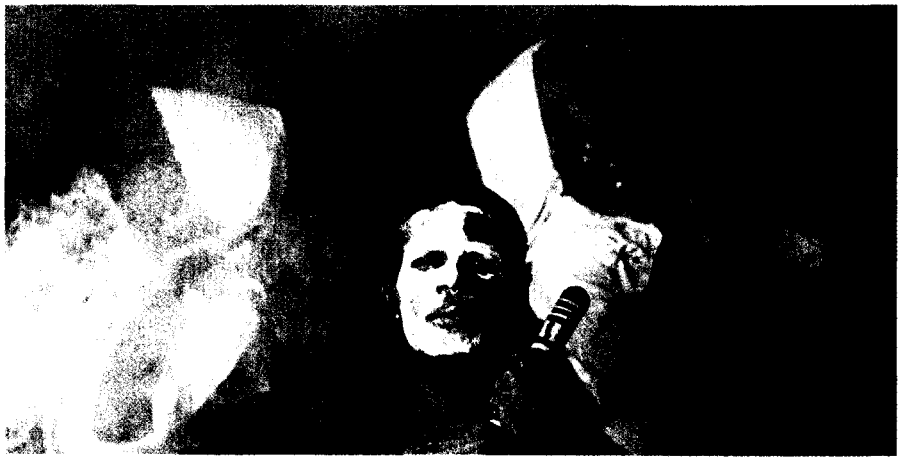

In Haiti, some traditions go back a thousand years.

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Park Avenue Eclectic

by Richard Thorne

When people say, 'What do you collect?' I have to say, 'I don't know,'" admits Alice M. Kaplan. She buys any artwork that strikes her fancy, that appeals to her rigorous discernment. Categories are irrelevant. As a result, a 3rd- or 4th-century stone Buddha from Pakistan rests on the wall over her living room fireplace. A 17th-century tapestry from Schleswig-Holstein depicting scenes from the life of John the Baptist hangs in her foyer. A 19th-century American weathervane made of copper, tin, and lead, in the shape of a four-foot-high Goddess of Liberty waving an American flag, rests in her study. A half-dozen drawings by Egon Schiele hang just inside the entrance to her Park Avenue apartment in New York City.

Her collection includes pieces that are Oriental, Middle Eastern, African, European, North American, and South American—and they date from a marble head carved in the Cyclades Islands at some time between 2700 and 2300 B.C. all the way up to a 1972 watercolor by David Levine. A wall of drawings contains originals by Rembrandt, Tiepolo, Blake, Ingres, Degas, even a Rubens study in chalk and ink of Titian's "Ecce Homo." It is difficult to imagine a more eclectic collection. Yet the assemblage is unified by Kaplan's strong personal taste and judgment. "Each piece stands on its own merit," she explains. "Their excellence as individual works justifies their grouping."

Kaplan's sense of beauty and composition reaches beyond works themselves to their setting. "I'm my own decorator," she says, "my own furniture buyer." She designed all the rooms and placed all of the art throughout the apartment she shares with her husband Jacob, a private financier who organized and, until 1958, served as president of the Welch Grape Juice Company.

Alice Kaplan chose to paint the apartment's three formal rooms black: the large entrance foyer, the living room, the dining room. Artworks on the walls are lit by fixtures recessed in white ceilings. Since Kaplan's taste in art often leads her to paintings, drawings, and carvings in subdued colors—grays, browns, dusty greens—the black walls serve to counteract the inherent reserve of the Kaplan collection, making the art stand out.

Further, her pieces are grouped in improbable arrangements that complement each other unexpectedly. In her living room, for instance, an 11th-century sandstone female divinity from Cambodia is flanked by twin Han dynasty Chinese wine jars dating from between 206 B.C. and 220 A.D. These three objects rest on a 16th-century wooden Portuguese chest in front of an 18th-century French mirror—and the arrangement looks perfectly natural, almost inevitable.

In the dining room, guests find themselves surrounded by a 14th-century limestone Virgin and Child from Burgundy, a 1969 red-and-orange sisal wall-hanging by Françoise Grossen; a cotton-and-wool mantel decorated with animal motifs (believed to be monkeys) woven at some time between the 12th and 15th centuries by Chancay tribeswomen in central Peru; and an abstract wooden collage by Uruguayan artist Gonzalo Fonseca.

Art abounds in the Kaplans' less formal family rooms as well. In the library (where at least half the books relate to the fine arts), one wall paneled in gold-blond wood displays a line-up of 16th- and 17th-century Nigerian bronzes; another wall sports lively Prendergast watercolors; and a large American Indian stone pipe-bowl, carved at an uncertain date between the 13th and 18th centuries in the shape of a flying bird, rests on a glass-topped coffee table. In her bedroom, the head of Alice Kaplan's bed rests against a wall covered with American drawings, watercolors, and oils.

Kaplan can't explain her distinctive sense of placement. All she can say is, "You have to respect the work of art and place it so that it will be displayed to its best advantage." But she usually knows precisely what she wants. Once, traveling through Cambodia, she discovered

Alice Kaplan in her living room. Behind her (from left): A Japanese screen attributed to Kaihoku Yusho (1553-1615); an Egyptian female torso (ca. 200 B.C.); an American folk carving of a snake; "Cliff No. 1," a sculpture by Gonzalo Fonseca; and "Velvet Pillows," an oil by Claudio Bravo. In foreground: a Pakistani head (ca. 3rd-4th centuries A.D.) rests on a bronze Cambodian drum.

ALEX WASINSKI

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PHOTOS BY ALEX WASINSKI

Top left: Looking from Alice Kaplan's formal living room toward her less formal library. On either side of the doorway: a Ch'ing Dynasty Chinese screen (ca. 1660), not only painted but carved as well. In front of the screen: an Aztec standing figure (1440-1521 A.D.) and a Chinese bronze military bell (481-221 B.C.).

Bottom left: Six drawings by Egon Schiele in the Kaplans' foyer.

Right: In the living room, an 11th-century Cambodian statue, flanked by Chinese wine jars (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), on a 16th-century Portuguese chest, in front of an 18th-century French mirror.

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an ancient bronze drum that she bought for $50. Later, deciding that she needed a pair in her living room to use as tables, she searched the U.S. for a duplicate, found one, and bought it—for $4,000.

Kaplan's affection for art is no recent development. "I had ambitions to be a painter before I was married," she explains. "I attended the Art Students League when I was 19 or 20. Then I went to college at the age of 21.

"During my sophomore year I went to Cuba where I met my husband who had sugar interests there. We were married a year and a half later in 1925." The Kaplans lived in Cuba for several years until the first of their four children was about to be born, then they returned

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to the United States to settle.

They moved into a New York City town house in 1940. "Even then I had lots of paintings that I had accumulated," Alice Kaplan explains. "They were interesting paintings—I always had drawings and paintings in my house, even as a young girl." But her collection began to take its present shape in the late Fifties. She had worked for Adlai Stevenson's second presidential campaign, and when he was defeated she asked herself what to do next. She decided to study for a master's degree in art history at Columbia University. "The experience just changed my life," she says. "It was during this period that I began going to galleries to see what I was studying—and I began collecting. It's true I had always bought paintings and drawings, but because of my studies, my judgment was greater. It blossomed.

"But I didn't start out to form a collection. I was never a collector in that sense. In fact, lots of my acquisitions were happy coincidences." For instance, in 1959 she got off an elevator on the wrong floor in a building full of art galleries and found herself serendipitously at the first exhibit in the U.S. of Egon Schiele. She had never heard of him before but bought the first of her many Schiele drawings on the spot.

About the same time, she obliged a friend by attending a charity auction where she spotted an Early American oil portrait (since dated at about 1835) of a woman in a black dress. She bought it, later acquiring two other oils in a similar style. In 1961, she read that an Early American portrait painter, Ammi Phillips, had just been identified—and she realized with a jolt that she already owned three of his oils. Her first Phillips ("I think I paid $50 for it") now hangs over her bed.

Similarly, she once spotted a drawing in an antiques shop. "French?" she asked the owner. "Italian," he assured her. She bought it, prowled through art books, and soon realized that she had acquired a previously unknown study drawn by Jacques Louis David in preparation for his painting "The Oath of the Horatii."

"I've made mistakes," Kaplan admits freely. "But then I sell them." She explains that she follows the art auction market very carefully—for buying as well as for selling—and she often makes the rounds of New York galleries on Saturdays. ("Of course!" she says. "What else do you do in New York on a Saturday?") But she has never sold a piece she loves—though other collectors regularly extend unsolicited offers.

Aware that her collection may someday be dispersed, irrevocably scattering the evidence of her discerning taste, Alice Kaplan has recently published a catalogue of her artworks that is being distributed by Columbia University Press. She wants the record, she explains, for her four children and eight grandchildren. She emphasizes that her collection was amassed entirely out of love for the objects. With her master's degree from Columbia behind her, she says, "I had sufficient knowledge to know what I was doing. But I never never never approached collecting as an investor. I bought each work because it touched me."

Having published a catalogue of the Alice M. Kaplan Collection, will she now retire from her relentless rounds of auctions and galleries? "I buy very little now," she says. Then she pauses. "Well," she admits, "I'm always acquiring something. It's a disease." ■

Richard Thorne writes about cultural issues for national publications.

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Eudora Welty

by Scot Haller

With a career encompassing nearly four dozen short stories, five novels, a Pulitzer Prize for The Optimist's Daughter, *and 40 years of tale-telling, Eudora Welty has indeed earned the title bestowed by one critic: "the Jane Austen of the South." Whether describing mishaps at the altar* (Delta Wedding) *or mayhem at a family reunion* (Losing Battles), *Welty fashions a delicate balance between acerbic comment and empathetic examination. As evidenced by her recent best seller,* The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty, *she is as venturesome in approach as was her mentor Katherine Anne Porter, and more forgiving of Mississippi folk than was her friend William Faulkner.*

The author of such antic, ironic yarns as "Why I Live at the P.O." and "Old Mr. Marblehall" is a low-keyed, gracious, good-natured lady who could moonlight as a professional grandmother. Her Southern drawl renders even the most matter-of-fact remark melodic. Her blue eyes are enormous, as if grown large from the tireless effort of astutely observing the world around her. In this case, that world is primarily Jackson, Mississippi, where she was born, raised, and still resides—in the same family house of her girlhood.

A vigorous proponent and practitioner of the short story, Welty predicts the hell-or-high-water survival of this endangered species. "It's such a natural way for the human imagination to express itself. I can't believe a little television is going to kill that." These conversations took place during a visit to New York City, in the days just before the writer's 72nd birthday.

SR *Have you always favored the short story over the novel?*

WELTY I'm quite certain that by nature I'm a short-story writer rather than a novelist. I think in terms of a single impulse, and I think of a short story as being a lyric impulse, something that begins and carries through and ends all in the same curve. Even though it may not be that in the working out. The novel, of course, from its inception is a different form of energy and direction and destination. So, if I discover by mistake what I think is a short story is really going to be a novel—which is the only way I've ever written a novel—I have to scrap the story and go back and begin again with that totally different timing.

SR *You've never consciously set out to write a novel?*

WELTY No, I'm not a very good novelist. In fact, I don't really know very much about it. I have to work it out as I go. I like to write scenes and I think of a novel in scenes, which is sort of like a short story. But for a novel, the scenes have to mount and have a continuity and momentum. So that's the work.

SR *When you're working on a story and you realize it should be a novel, that it should be* Losing Battles, *is that a good feeling or a bad feeling?*

WELTY Oh, it's a sinking feeling. But I wouldn't do it if it didn't tempt me madly. *Losing Battles* is a good case because I thought it was going to be a story of 45 or 50 pages, consisting of a family at a reunion, talking about the return from the penitentiary of a father. The whole story was to be their view of what he had done, and it was to end with his bursting in upon this scene asking them what was the matter. But as soon as he appeared, I just was crazy about him and I had to go on and have him in the scene. So I kept doing it. *Losing Battles* gave me such a hell of a time.

SR *When you start writing a short story, do you always know what the end will be?*

WELTY Yes. I think the end is implicit in the beginning. It must be. If that isn't there in the beginning, you don't know what you're working toward. You should have a sense of a story's shape and form and its destination, all of which is like a flower inside a seed.

SR *Is revision pleasure or pain for you?*

WELTY A pleasure. I do an awful lot of it. It's strange how in revision you find some little unconsidered thing which is so essential that you not only keep it in but give it preeminence when you revise. Sometimes in the dead of night, it will come to me. Well, that's what I should do, that's what I'm working toward! It was there all the time.

SR *And then do you get up in the dead of night and work, or do you wait until morning?*

WELTY I usually make a note right away: "Move something." Just a word.

ERIC LIEBOWITZ

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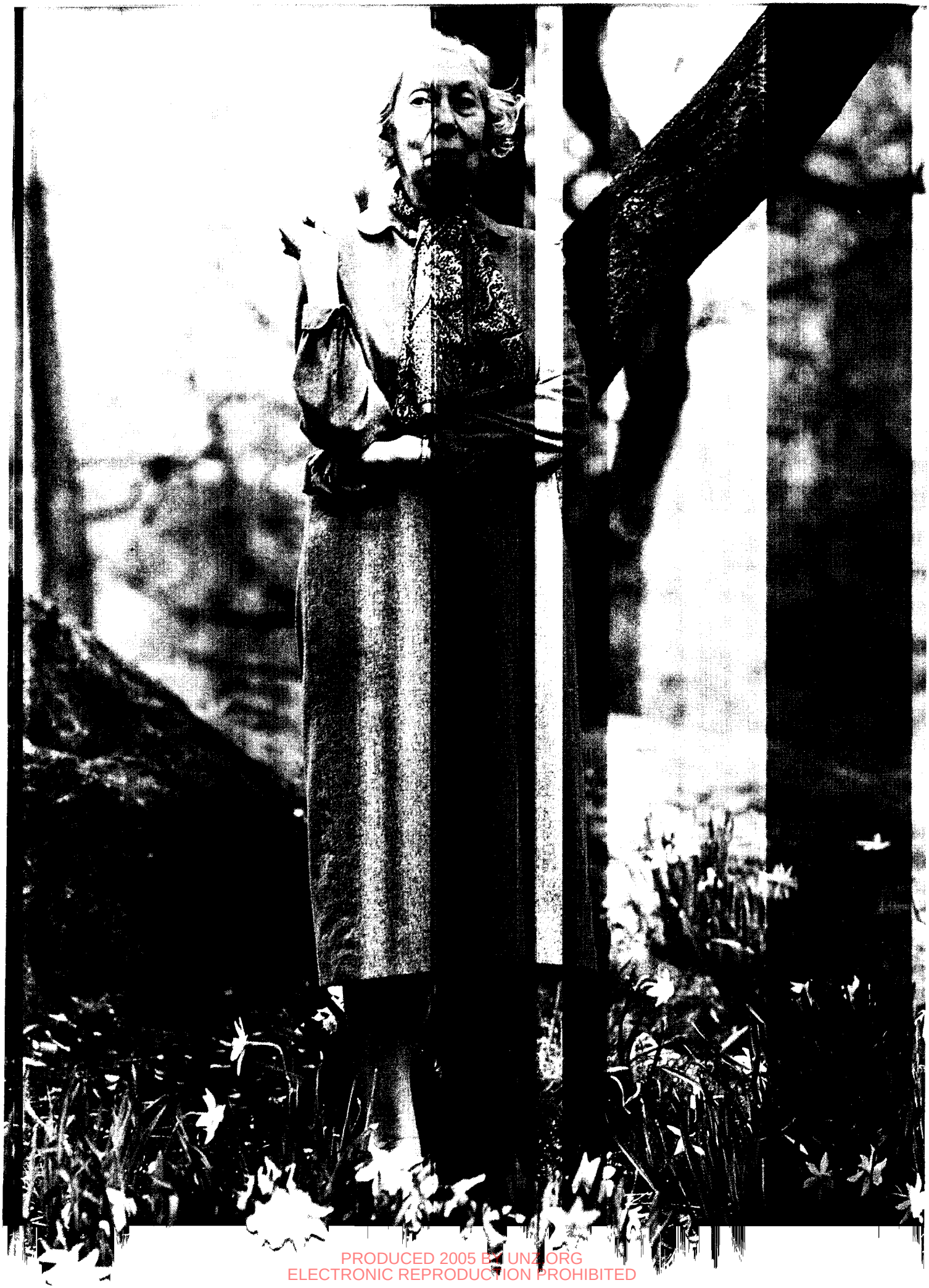

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When I get back to the story in the morning I just write.

As I go along, I usually destroy drafts of stories. Unless I realize it's going to be a novel and then I cautiously keep—overcautiously keep—everything because I'm too dumb to know whether I'm going to need it or not. But in a short story, I like to tear up as I go. I can correct better then and not have such an intimate feeling about the story. Some piece of stubbornness in the back of your mind always wants you to leave in some pet thing, but you really ought to take it out.

SR *Have you discovered any perils in revision?*

WELTY There's something you don't want to lose, which is the freshness and spontaneity of the original burst forward. You don't want to lose it, even if it means for flaws of one kind or another. You can correct with gentle revision, but leave the sense of that headlong feeling of a short story. I don't really write as headlong as I would like.

SR *Does the Southern climate play any part in your writing?*

WELTY I find it easier to write in the dead of summer when it's hot as blazes, and nobody stirs very much. It's much calmer and more quiet in Mississippi. I like to write in the summer. In fact, I associate it with typing and sweating, because it's hard work to type, even if you're in an air-conditioned room. I associate happiness and getting something right with hot summer.

SR *What shape does your writing routine take?*

WELTY Well, I'm a morning person. The earlier I can begin, the better. I wake up knowing what I want to write—when I'm in progress with a story. So I wake up ready to go, and I try to use that morning energy and freshness. I used to keep it up practically all day; I can't do that anymore. I get tired and miss things and have to do it over.

I have a stenographer notebook, one of those things you can carry around. And I usually make notes, all kinds of notes, in this book toward a first draft.

ERIC LIEBOWITZ

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Then I type out my first draft. I like the objectivity of a clean sheet of paper. To judge if a scene or a page is any good at all, I have to type it first. And then I keep working on the typewriter, but I correct all the time in pencil. It's too long and too slow to write anything in pencil when you want that first rush of feeling. And my last draft, I like to type all at once, which gives me a sense of the thing as a whole.

SR *But you only write when you feel moved to do so?*

WELTY I just work whenever I have something to write. A work of fiction creates its own rules in the writing. Each story is a different challenge, a different opportunity to do something. It has a life of its own and I think you should honor that. You know, when you're writing a story, it seems to be with you at all times. You think about it all the time, whether you're working on it or not. And your ears are magnets that hear things pertinent to the story and they don't quite hear the other things.

SR *Why did you turn to writing?*

WELTY Oh, I think I became a writer because I love stories. And I just decided I wanted to write some. I never had any idea that I could be a professional writer. I'm now realizing, maybe the reason I first sent stories out to magazines was that I was too shy to show them to anybody I knew. When I began to write stories, I could not have let my family or my friends see them. I thought, well, I'll send these to an abstract reader. And so I sent them out systematically to the editors of magazines, just to see what they would say. That kept it on an objective basis. And I was not surprised to receive rejection slips, and I was thrilled if there was a note that said: "Try us again."

SR *Why couldn't you show your friends and family the stories?*

WELTY I was just too *shy*. I'm a shy person anyway. I still am.

SR *What intrigued you about writing then?*

WELTY I'm not sure how soon I could have put any of this into words, but I think I was trying to write about the intensity of the spirit. And since I'm a visual-minded person, I think I often did it—maybe overdid it—through description. Also, I like funny things and I've always enjoyed listening to people's conversations. And it was a great discovery to find that I could work with that. I soon realized it was much more than just transcribing what you hear. You have to shape and form to make it function in a story. That's hard, isn't it? And I love to do it.

SR *Do you believe that the South perhaps has a monopoly on the best stories and the conversation to overhear?*

WELTY Yes, I do. I don't think that there's any doubt that you grow up being aware of being amused and delighted and impressed by things that are told. And also I think—this is probably no longer true in the South or anywhere—in the days when no one moved around very much and you and everybody else in town lived in the same place for a long time, you followed the generations. You had a wonderful sense of the continuity of life. And I think that's terribly important. It gives you a narrative sense without knowing it. Cause and effect. And the surprises of life and the unpredictability of life. I do think that's important. It has been to me.

SR *You've spent most of your life in the same house in Mississippi. You don't believe then that a writer must go and seek out experiences for inspiration, as did Hemingway and his crowd?*

WELTY No, it's always at hand. I've always had the feeling that—whatever people's experiences are—their emotions are universal. And so you can put yourself in any imagined character's shoes or lay your story anywhere and you're still writing in the common language. It doesn't too much matter where you are. To me. It's funny because the critics did say that everything that I wrote was laid in the South and it was bad to be so parochial. Then when I wrote a book of stories laid in Europe, written from the point of view of a traveler [*The Bride of the Innisfallen and Other Stories*], the critics complained: "She should stick to where she knows best."

SR *Flannery O'Connor once suggested that anyone who has survived childhood knows enough about life to write for the rest of his days.*

> ***"I don't live such an eventful life.... It's all on the inside. I can imagine a lot better than I can remember."***

WELTY I'm sure that's true. Especially in Flannery's case. I don't live such an eventful life on the outside, and it wouldn't translate very well into an exciting narrative. It's all on the inside. I have a good imagination. I can imagine a lot better than I can remember.

SR *Since you work only when you feel compelled, how do you spend the rest of your time?*

WELTY Well, there's a lot of things to do at home. I'm interested in the stage. We have a group there and I have a family there and I love to read, of course. Every night and a lot of the time in the daytime, I read for pleasure.

In fact, the only advice I give young writers is something that is alarmingly new to some of them; that is to read. It never occurs to them. I say, "If you love to write, how can you miss what has been written? How can you do without that great pleasure and wonder of what other people have written?"

I know one of the things that has influenced me is my childhood reading of myths and fairy tales. I had these books at home, and I just read them as soon as I learned to read, you know, and loved them. I suppose they answer the same need, really, that lyrical

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impulse.

I was crazy about all the bloody Grimm ones, like the Goose Girl and all those things about the seven brothers going out and one being changed into a swan. They're perfect short stories, worn down through the centuries by air and smoothed over to perfection.

SR *Are you conscious of myths and fairy tales in your short stories?*

WELTY Yes. I wrote one book that does draw freely on myths—all kinds of myths, Greek, Norwegian, anything—just because I feel they do permeate life and endure in our imagination. So, I drew on that, without having to think, really. It was not an artificial kind of thing. I've suffered a bit from people finding one-to-one symbolism in it.

SR *Which book was that?*

WELTY It was called *The Golden Apples* and the golden apples themselves are in many myths, not just one. I used them in several different senses. That was fun to write, but in those days it never occurred to me that people would seize on these things and press to explain why I did this and that. You know, maybe I would have thought twice. I would have gone on writing it, but I might not have been so free.

SR *Do you read reviews of your work nowadays?*

WELTY When a book comes out, I'm very anxious to know if people like it. I do read the reviews. What I don't too often read are critical articles about old work of mine. Many are valuable to me but some are perturbing, and some of them I don't even get a handle on.

SR *Since you also write criticism, can you tell us how a critic can be helpful to a writer?*

WELTY I don't think I really am a critic. I like to respond to a work and to do so with a full heart, but I'm not a *learned* person and don't know the histories of things. I could not write a critical evaluation of anything. I just review the things that I respond to. I'm a reviewer, if anything; I'm not a critic.

SR *You clearly derive more pleasure from the act of writing than do a good many authors.*

WELTY I love writing! I love it.

SR *Is there anything about the experience of writing you don't like?*

WELTY Just the sheer drudgery. I never used to mind all the typing I did. But now I resent the time it takes from really writing. All that typing has nothing to do with the act of writing. It's just your being your own secretary. But I really enjoy everything, even proofreading.

"I've often found writing difficult, but the difficulties are the pleasures. I really like something hard to do...."

SR *Was there ever a time when writing wasn't a pleasure?*

WELTY Oh, I've often found it difficult, but I think the difficulties are pleasures. You know, I really like something hard to do in the way of words. That's part of the pleasure. In fact, I wouldn't be very interested in writing a story that didn't pose something that had to be solved.

SR *Which among your stories are your favorites?*

WELTY I think the ones that were the hardest to do. I love a story I wrote. I realized it when I was reading the proofs on *The Collected Stories,* at which time I read them all through for the first time in years. I liked the one called ... it's the one about the three figures meeting in the woods, about Lorenzo Dow, John James Audubon, and Murrell the Bandit, back in 1798. I'll think of the title in a minute. "A Still Moment." "A Still Moment" I think is the name of it. I imagined them meeting in the wilderness, because they all were in that part of the world at that time, three visions of life that meet. It was a complicated story and was entirely imaginary, but those people were all alive at one time. And it gave me a great deal of pleasure to write it. It's not my usual story.

SR *What did it feel like to read your collected stories?*

WELTY It was extraordinary because, as I say, I'm not in the habit of reading my own work. So I was surprised a lot of times. I had forgotten until I reached each story. It was just like going on a train into a landscape that you're familiar with. You forget what's ahead and then as you see it, everything unfolds. It was a very strange feeling—almost like another person and yet terribly much like yourself.

SR *Have you been surprised to find your book on the best-seller list?*

WELTY I'm absolutely astonished! I've never had this kind of thing happen. I'm really very thrilled about it. I'd be a fool if I weren't. I can't imagine how it happened. Sometimes the books have done well for a few weeks. But, you know, I'm not one of the *sellers.* I make a respectable living, but I have to do many things to guarantee that. That's the reason I do college visits and book reviews. I like it that way.

SR *Can you tell us about your work-in-progress?*

WELTY I'd rather not. I have a superstition that you can talk it away.

SR *Is it a novel?*

WELTY Well, I *hope* not. It's a great big envelope full of stuff that looks as if it might be a novel. But I don't want it to be. I don't think it deserves to be. I'm going to see if I can't shape it back the way I thought it was going. When I get home, I'm going to whack at it. ■

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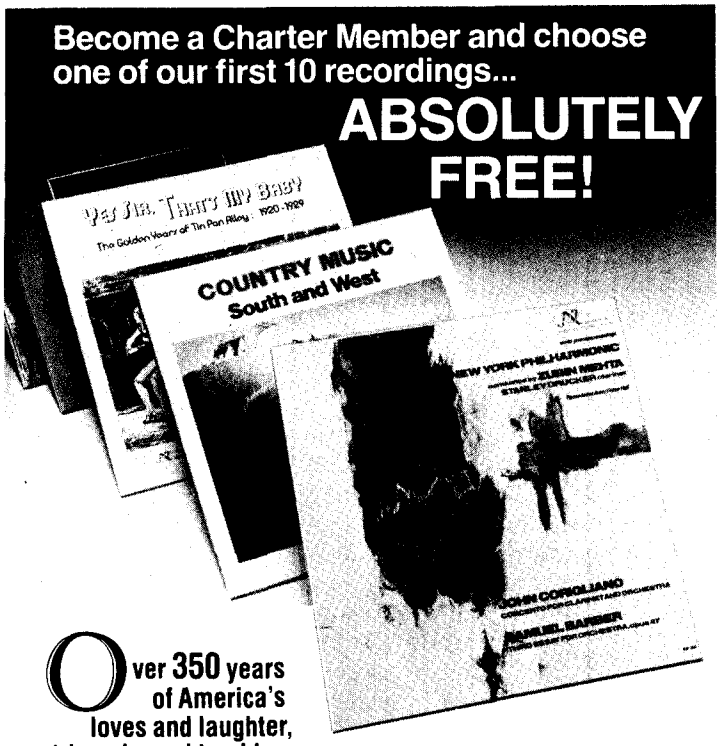

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Gory Teddy

by Garry Wills

Mornings on Horseback
by David McCullough
Simon & Schuster
384 pp., $17.95

In the Twenties, a reporter for the Atlanta *Journal* visited a cluster of antebellum mansions to interview an old woman on the life those homes represented. Walking through one of them, Bulloch Hall, the reporter marveled at the elegant staircase and pictured a bridal party coming down the stairs. The woman being interviewed said: "Weddings were great affairs, then.... Of course, Mittie Bulloch's wedding was a very fine affair." This hardy survivor had been Martha Bulloch's bridesmaid when the young Georgia belle wed Theodore Roosevelt (Sr.) in 1853.

The reporter, of course, was Margaret Mitchell; and this tidbit is typical of the odd new things David McCullough has turned up in his third passage through the Theodore Roosevelt years —for his books first on the Brooklyn Bridge, then on the Panama Canal, and now on the first 27 years in the life of our 26th President. The connection between Roosevelt and *Gone With the Wind* is unexpected but important. "Mittie" Bulloch took her mother north, where both women suffered vicariously during the Civil War with their relatives fighting in the South. Young Roosevelt's uncle was a blockade runner like Rhett Butler. In England, where he fled after the war, this Southern relative, in later years, helped stimulate his nephew's interest in naval affairs.

McCullough argues convincingly that part of Roosevelt's fascination with the "Wild West" came from its resemblance to the Old South described by his mother in stories that had frightened him as a child. The Old South was a place where slaves fought with cougars and bears, where a bear had half-scalped one slave and left him "Bear (Bare) Bob." Relatives were shot in duels there, and the plantation owner had to impose order singlehandedly on his domain. Roosevelt was reclaiming this heritage when he bought his cattle ranch in the West. He insisted he was no cowboy but an owner working his estate, hunting as gentlemen do, but principally interested in his beef "crop." Even his gun proclaimed his gentlemanly status:

> It was a lever-action 45-75 Winchester (Model 1876) that had been custom made to his specifications—"stocked and sighted to suit myself." It was engraved with deer and buffalo and antelope, but more than that, "the best weapon I ever had ... handy to carry, whether on foot or on horseback... comes up to the shoulder as readily as a shotgun ... deadly, accurate ... unapproachable for the rapidity of its fire and the facility with which it is loaded."

(Later, on the way to his Rough Rider command, Roosevelt would have his uniform made by Brooks Brothers.)

Roosevelt went West to civilize his own estate, to keep out vagrants, and to discipline "lesser breeds without the law." This enterprise, in which he invested so much money and time during his middle twenties, looked backward to the romanticized South and forward to the civilizing mission he would claim for America in the world.

Just two years ago, Edmund Morris published his brilliant study, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, which takes its subject to the year 1901 (and the presidency). McCullough's book corresponds, in chronology and length, with the first half of Morris's; it is not as fluently written, nor as complete on the life of Roosevelt himself. McCullough wanders down interesting side lanes, fascinated by secondary figures. The result makes for jagged reading, but for interesting juxtapositions; and it probes deeper into key aspects of Roosevelt's youth.

Morris, for instance, refuses to speculate on Roosevelt's desire to accumulate vast numbers of dead animals. McCullough associates this with two gifts that changed young Roosevelt's life—his first gun, and the glasses he had needed all along, though no one noticed this until he found that other boys were shooting birds he could not even see. The gifts, in conjunction, gave him new horizons to survey and command, admiring distant birds and bringing them down with equal delight. Soon after this power was given him, the Roosevelts sailed up the Nile, where little "Teedie" shot (in his own words) "between one and two hundred" interesting Egyptian birds, stuffing as many as he could—to the disgust of his younger brother Elliott, who lived in a taxidermist's debris of beaks, entrails, skins, and arsenic.

Teedie's father was a gentle heir to his Dutch forebears' business, a man who had not hunted himself. But he indulged his son as part of the discipline that was turning the asthma-racked weakling into a fiercely determined athlete. The boy seemed visibly to draw in health from the death of all those birds. Buffalo and bears would soon be added to the list of animals obliterated. Teedie always envied his poor failure of a brother—who had shot a tiger, one of the few beasts the elder son had not destroyed. He was described at times as "needing to kill something," and when an Oyster Bay neighbor's dog trotted out by his horse one morning, he shot

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that, "rolling it over with my revolver very neatly as it ran alongside the horse."

Young Roosevelt's first encounter with the West was in the adventure stories of Captain Mayne Reid, a blood-and-thunder storyteller who was also a naturalist—he interjected the scientific name of any beast that had happened across the plot. McCullough writes:

> A [Reid] story suddenly stops so a Darwinian "Chain of Destruction" may be dramatized. A tarantula is killed by a hummingbird, which is eaten by a chameleon, which is done in by a scorpion lizard, which is swallowed by a snake, which falls prey to a kite; then the kite is the victim of an eagle, and the eagle is shot by the boy-hero....

In a passage like that, a person and a culture come together and fuse.

Social Darwinism was more than a metaphor to Roosevelt, who said "the will rises in the heart" as one goes into battle. The battles of Las Guasimas and San Juan Hill were bloody enough to turn Stephen Crane's stomach; but they delighted Roosevelt. "Look at all these damned Spanish dead!" he exulted. One of his soldiers, an old family friend, wrote Roosevelt's wife from Cuba: "No hunting trip so far has ever equalled it in Theodore's eyes. It makes up for the omissions of many past years.... T. was just reveling in victory and gore." He never felt more alive than when killing something. And America would live by the conquest of other nations as he had by the death of other animals—it was, he said, our "destiny to swallow up the land of all adjoining nations too weak to withstand us."

McCullough spends more time than Morris on the asthma attacks that tortured Roosevelt in his youth. These not only left the sleepless child exhausted; they affected all the family's plans, schedules, vacations, and places of residence. The Roosevelts were Manhattan burghers; but the elder Theodore began regular trips to Oyster Bay to give his son country air. The whole family was immobilized when Teedie was, and reenergized when he gained health. They seemed to respire to his rhythms, and in time he absorbed all his siblings into his own career. His hunchbacked and brilliant elder sister lived for and near him always; his younger brother, unable to compete (except in the matter of tigers), became an alcoholic and died young; the younger sister loved only Teedie, though she went through the motions of marriage. He drew the life out of others.

Theodore Roosevelt "never felt more alive than when killing something."

He was, certainly, a genial predator; he felt he was fighting for his life with every breath he drew. If he did not, every moment, drive himself forward, the sickness would draw him backward to that bully ridden weakling he had been and whose memory he now despised. The imperative to survive demanded sacrifice. When his first wife died, he refused to discuss or write of her ever after; the daughter she left was given to his sister for raising; when he remarried, he tried unsuccessfully to keep that daughter away from his new wife. Tender memories cripple a man who must stay tough. Roosevelt typifies the way aggression arises from a sense of weakness, not of strength. He drove his own sickly son almost to the point of breakdown. In the White House he lost the sight in one eye, from a boxing match, part of his regular gymnasium routine. Even as President he had to keep arming himself against bullies; which meant that he had to keep blinding himself. ■

Syndicated columnist Garry Wills is the author, among other books, of *Nixon Agonistes* and *Inventing America*.

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Singer in a Strange Land

by Lynne Sharon Schwartz

Lost in America
by Isaac Bashevis Singer
translated by Joseph Singer
Doubleday
256 pp., $17.95

In 1935, Isaac Bashevis Singer, young Polish Jew, writer, amorist, and seeker after truth, flees the coming Nazi catastrophe on a ship bound for America. "I was what the cabala calls a naked soul—a soul which has departed one body and awaits another."

His voyage is Kafkaesque. The naked soul is defenseless, prey to the harrowing delusions of solitary confinement amid strangers. He is seated alone in the dining room; he alone is served no wine, only crusts of bread and an occasional onion; waiters snarl; his cabin keeps disappearing; he begins to fear sunlight and air. How much of this is true the narrator himself hardly knows. It is the truth of a terrified man's situation in an historical moment. Singer says in a note that *Lost in America* and the two earlier companion volumes, *A Little Boy in Search of God* and *A Young Man in Search of Love*, are "a form of fiction set against a background of truth." The titles are apt. The first two suggest the optimism of quest, but in this latest the search is abandoned, the seeker himself misplaced.

Read aloud, especially by as engaging a reader as I.B. Singer, that ocean voyage might seem amusing. After all, we know things turned out all right for the young man in his adopted country—20 volumes of fiction and reminiscence, fame, a Nobel Prize. Singer knows it too: He can describe the depths of depression—bedbugs in ugly furnished rooms, bleak cafeteria meals, spiritual self-flagellation, and alternating sexual deprivation and excess—with serenity of distance and survival. But the lost young man sees nothing humorous. He knows only that he has left behind forever, probably soon to be annihilated, his home, fellow writers, mother, brother, and the four or five women with whom he has been conducting simultaneous love affairs.

Though uniquely gifted, during the few years sketched here Singer writes almost nothing. Instead he hides from America, even from the welcoming community of emigré writers and Yiddishists. Alone, he ponders with growing frustration the nature of God and the meaning of suffering. He emerges stealthily, by night, to drop off a weekly potboiler column at the *Jewish Daily Forward*, and on one memorable occasion to make an Alice-in-Wonderland foray into Canada to secure a permanent visa. Unique in his gifts but universal in his embodiment of alienation, he dreams himself a mighty lover, world deliverer, destroyer of Hitler, but shrinks like a pre-adolescent before his older brother, Israel Joshua Singer, an established novelist and solid family man.

Like many exiles, Singer is hypersensitive to surroundings. The moment he obtains a tourist visa to come to America, Warsaw appears foreign and alluring; in a Proustian moment, he already longs for the place he has longed to leave. As the train passes through Germany, "land of the Inquisition," he sees from a window Jews "being herded inside a building to be searched." Manhattan is

JILL KREMENTZ

Singer's language is magical: He is "a contriver in the best sense of the word."

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"a giant exhibition of Cubist paintings and theater props." Glimpsing Coney Island, the flashing ocean fringed by amusement parks and freak shows, he feels "some mental catastrophe taking place here, some mutation for which there was no name in my vocabulary." Around his brother's house, "Seagate lay in suburban darkness"; a nighttime walk in its tiny confines evokes the adventures of Arctic explorers. His isolation is cosmic: Even the New York City sky is opaque, its stars veiled.

The language of *Lost in America* (translated by Joseph Singer, the author's nephew) is transparent and effortless; it meanders conversationally yet lyrically with such ease as to appear lax. Yet it possesses, as Singer remarks about Paris, "that originality that evolves by itself out of genuine talent, a harmony that no one can imitate." Its effect, as in Singer's best fiction, is cumulative and magical, the whole incalculably greater than the sum of its parts. Offhandedly, it conveys the flavor of a world and a grievous segment of history, not only the author's but that of thousands of similarly uprooted Jews.

The young Singer imagines, as writers do, that were he to reveal his true self readers would find him "a pornographer, a contriver, mad." Whether *Lost in America* is that exercise in revelation is dubious—the man seems to have as many layers as the onions he was so rudely served aboard ship. In any event, he is not mad and certainly no pornographer (the descriptions of his love life are reticent, funny, and tinged with an ambiguous holiness), but a contriver, yes, in the best sense of the word. A *poseur* and a smuggler. "Life in general," he theorizes, "and Jewish life especially, [is] one long attempt to... smuggle oneself past the forces of destruction." Writing is smuggling too: The precious cargo of *Lost in America*—its sense of mystery, of God's intransigence and mankind's needful resilience, of the creative energy in ordinary events endlessly generating the unexpected—is smuggled past the anecdotal account of a transoceanic journey. ■

Lynne Sharon Schwartz is the author of two novels, *Rough Strife* (nominated for an American Book Award and for the PEN.-Ernest Hemingway Foundation first novel award) and *Balancing Acts*.

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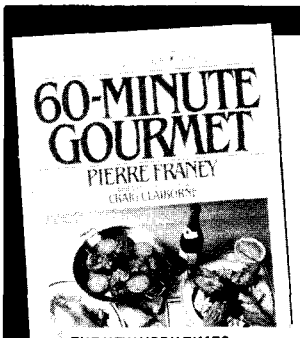

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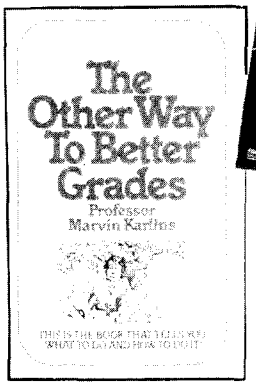

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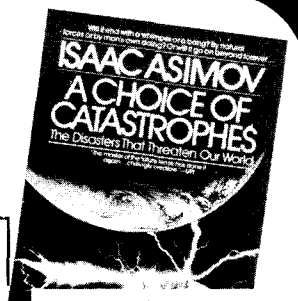

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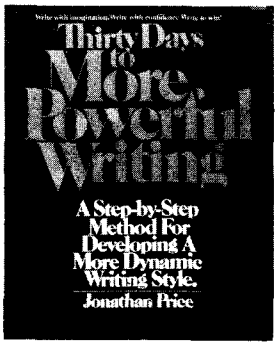

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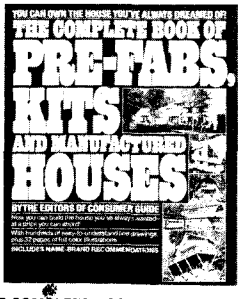
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For Whom Nobel Tolled

by Joshua Gilder

The Issa Valley
by Czeslaw Milosz
translated by
Louis Iribarne
Farrar, Straus & Giroux
296 pp., $13.95

The Issa Valley has the distinction of being inhabited by an unusually large number of devils." They're rather short, and for some reason dress like 18th-century Germans. They wear green frock coats, jabots, tie their hair back in pigtails. Perhaps, since their favorite pastime is dancing in empty scutching sheds, they're trying to "lend themselves an air of gravity by dressing up in the manner of Immanuel Kant."

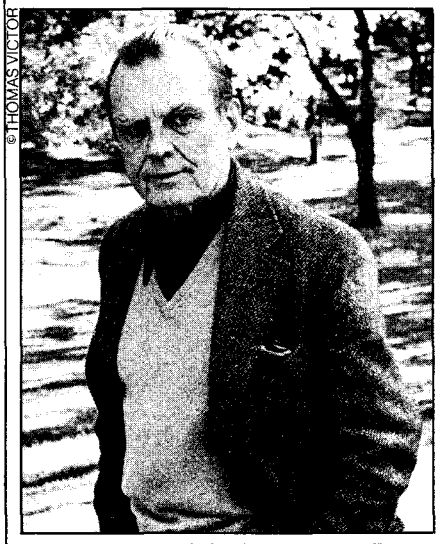
These creatures came along with Christianity to the Issa—and though Christianity arrived in this rural river valley in Lithuania centuries ago, it still seems like a visitor here. They peacefully coexist with the native magical fauna: the forest witch who switches babies in their cradles, the tiny kingdoms under the elderberry roots. The valley is, in fact, overrun by magical beings; it is obviously a fertile place for the workings of the imagination.

Czeslaw Milosz's novel, a tender and insightful evocation of childhood, seems to have grown organically from this fecund imaginative soil. *The Issa Valley* is colored by nostalgia, but not obscured by it. Milosz shines a clear light on memory: the often painful evolution of consciousness on that strange journey from early childhood to adolescence.

The central character, Thomas, experiences an infancy of almost perfect felicity. On summer mornings he wakes to the music of "a steady stream of voices bathed in never ending light. . . . Touch was also a kind of ecstasy—the feel of naked feet racing over smooth boards onto the cool of a corridor's tiled floor, over a garden path's circular flagstones wet with dew."

But even the happiest childhood is a process of coming to terms with a mysterious world:

> When he could walk, he spent most of his time exploring the house. In the dining room he was reluctant to approach the oilcloth sofa—less because of the portrait of a man clad in armor with purple trim, and so stern a gaze, than of the two horribly twisted ceramic figures standing on the mantel. He never ventured into the part of the house referred to as the "salon," and even as a grown boy he felt ill at ease there.


©THOMAS VICTOR

Milosz's book is joyful and accessible.

These early apprehensions later crystalize into self-consciousness, as is so often the case, around a confused, dawning awareness of sex and death when the village priest's affair with his housekeeper ends badly in her suicide.

It's a pity that our awareness of Milosz had to come freighted with the Nobel committee's pronouncements on him. In awarding Milosz the prize last year, the committee said: "In both an outward and an inward sense he is an exiled writer, a stranger for whom physical exile is really a reflection of a metaphysical—or even religious—spiritual exile applying to humanity in general." *Stranger. Exile.* The Camus titles fall thick and fast. One may wonder if this spiritual exile really does apply to humanity in general, or indeed to Milosz in particular. It seems existentialism has become the reigning intellectual orthodoxy, and it is now impossible to talk of a writer in any other terms.

I bring this up because it would be a shame if "existentialism" were added to an already formidable list of disuasions—lugubrious Pole, exiled writer, and, worst of all, poet—that collectively might keep people from reading this joyful and accessible book. Compare the Nobelers' dry existential catechism with Milosz's handling of the same issue: He imagines a parliamentary session of hundreds of thousands of the tiny devils. The Central Committee on Infernos announces that all dancing in the forests will have to cease. From now on specialists will operate surreptitiously on people's minds. The applause is strained; the delegates realize "that progress has consigned them to gloomy chasms, and that they will never again witness the setting of the sun, the flight of the kingfishers, the glitter of the stars, and all the wonders of the uncircumscribable earth."

The parable is clear: how the gray straightjacket of social realism could force the imagination, and thus the artist—even one whose love of his home country is so palpable as in this book—into a bitter exile. ■

Joshua Gilder is associate editor of *Saturday Review*.

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Fiction Briefs

Fires
by Marguerite Yourcenar
translated by Dori Katz in collaboration with the author
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 89 pp., $10.95

TO REVEL in classical literature and successfully incorporate it into a modern literary form is Marguerite Yourcenar's special genius. *Fires* refers to the fires of love; in these brief austere essays she alternates personal confession of a consuming love affair with ancient Greek stories of such figures as Phaedra, Achilles, and Clytemnestra. Her purpose is to illuminate her personal feelings while setting them in the context of universal and familiar emotions: sadness, joy, hatred, and fear.

Fires was written more than 40 years ago when Yourcenar was 32. In the introduction, she expresses admiration for the virtues of great French narrative; her heroes include Racine, Victor Hugo, and Anatole France. Here, as in *Memoirs of Hadrian* and *Coup de Grace*, she combines a meditation on history and an intimate self-portrait with enormous success. She writes: "Love is a penalty. We are punished for not having been able to stay alone." And: "When I leave you, I have always within me my suffering like a sort of terrible offspring." French though she is, the power she evokes is as fierce as the Maine coast where she has spent most of her life.

—VALERIE BROOKS

Balancing Acts
by Lynne Sharon Schwartz
Harper & Row, 224 pp., $9.95

IN THIS EXTREMELY likable novel a retired acrobat captures the imagination and affections of a 13-year-old girl. During the uneven course of their relationship one of them learns to accept life and the other to relinquish it. Alison Markman, daughter of middle-class suburban parents, combats the demons of adolescence by writing stories with heroic female protagonists. Max Fried, 74-year-old ex-stuntman and trapeze artist, has suffered a series of heart attacks and is submitting with bad grace to the indignities of life in a "health-related facility." Each is looking for transcendence, a way to escape the law of gravity. What they find, as they jostle each other's lives, is a precarious sense of balance.

The novel is well-written, artfully constructed, and peopled with engaging characters, but it suffers from an excess of symmetry. Schwartz's first novel, *Rough Strife*—a fine anatomy of a marriage—was also about a kind of balance, but the author left the edges a bit rough, like marriage itself. In *Balancing Acts*, perhaps because the protagonists are more vulnerable, the effect is less abrasive, and the central metaphor is polished to an insistent shine. Like the grown man in the riddle of the sphinx, the book walks very nicely on two legs, but unlike the author's first novel, it seldom soars.

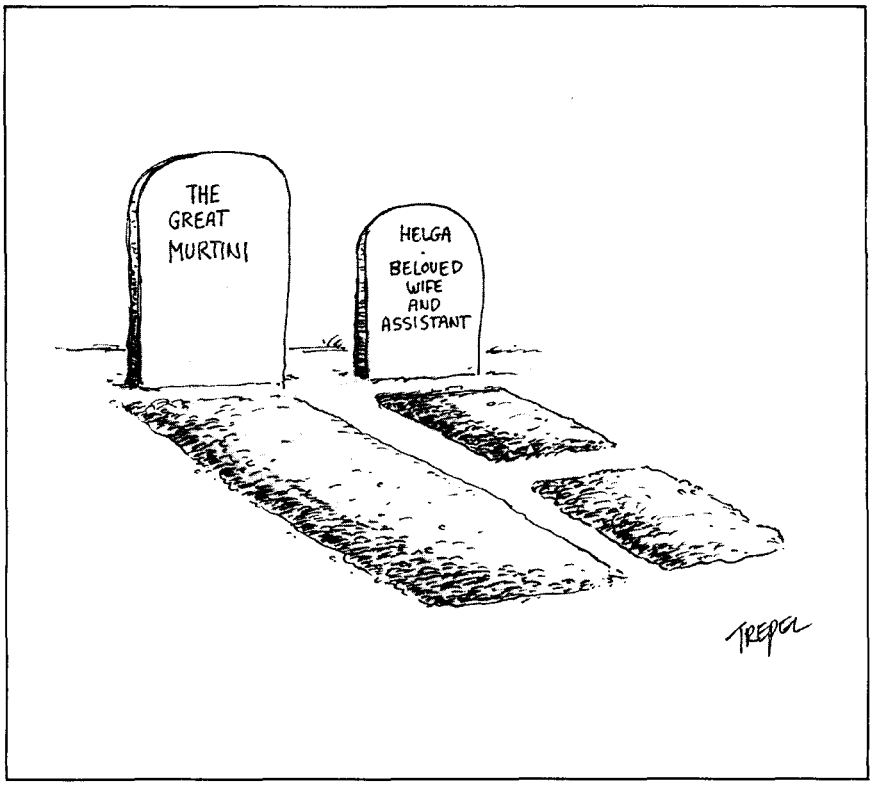
—JUDITH GIES

The Comfort of Strangers
by Ian McEwan
Simon & Schuster, 135 pp., $8.95

IAN McEWAN'S second novel, *The Comfort of Strangers*, does not resemble Daphne Du Maurier's short story "Don't Look Now" as much as his first novel, *The Cement Garden*, resembled Julian Gloag's *My Mother's House*. But the thought persists that until McEwan comes up with a totally original narrative, his potent writing skills won't be enough to place him in the front rank of contemporary British writers (a position some claim he's already achieved).

Actually, *The Comfort of Strangers* belongs to the "Death in Venice" school: The protagonists vacationing in that labyrinthine city are drawn into confrontations with their own guilt by various symbols dressed up as enigmatic personages. Colin and Mary, who have lived together for seven years and are experiencing some undiagnosable *mal de* relationship, are irresistibly attracted to a suspicious Italian couple with homicidal intentions. Once again McEwan suggests in cool and precise prose that there are destructive compulsions in all sexual behavior. Whether this is psychologically valid or merely a vestige of Victorian attitudes is secondary to McEwan's ability to create a sinister mood, bringing the reader to the point of screaming warnings like "Don't go in there!" Nevertheless, *The Comfort of Strangers* is another gondola ride on a well-traveled canal.

—DAVID FINKLE



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On Heroes and Tombs
by Ernesto Sabato
translated by Helen R. Lane
David R. Godine, 496 pp., $17.95

IN A CRUMBLING Buenos Aires mansion, Martín listens to an old man tell a story: Defeated soldiers bear the body of their general toward the Bolivian frontier. Nearing safety, they dismember the putrid corpse, collect the bones, and preserve the heart in a flagon of brandy. The remaining bits of flesh float downstream, back to the soil.

When Martín hears the story, it is a century later, in the age of Perón. Argentina is bones and a heart. It is also the despoiled body of General Lavalle. Martín, young, woebegone, makes no connections. It is through his bewildered eyes that we get one side of this huge story of the decline and corruption of the Olmos family. He is in love with the last Olmos—a haunting, driven woman, the poisoned fruit of a poisoned flower. The flower is her father, the deranged Fernando Vidal, whose memoir, "Report on the Blind," is the metaphorical heart of the novel. It is a tale told by a madman, full of sound and fury, signifying everything.

The author's Argentina is a place of decay and resurrection, a Dostoyevkian landscape filled with allegory, surrealism, and metaphor. The result is a national epic, as intricate and mythic as the history of author Ernesto Sabato's country. "To write realistically about his society has peculiar difficulties," V.S. Naipaul said of Argentina; "to render it accurately in fiction might be impossible." Look again.

– JAMES POLK

Other People: A Mystery Story
by Martin Amis
The Viking Press, 224 pp., $11.95

THE MYSTERY STORY has frequently been used in the 20th century as a springboard for experimental fictions that deliberately jump from the banal into the metaphysical. Vladimir Nabokov and Jorge Luis Borges, for example, turned the analytic implications of the mystery story inward, to challenge the nature of fictional narrative—and both authors are obliquely referred to in this challenging novel.

Mary Lamb, the innocent victim of amnesia and other people, slowly comes to realize she is the destructive Amy Hide, presumed murdered. When she finally resumes her Hide identity and destructive ways, Amy-Mary is again murdered, only to be reincarnated as a young woman about to be confronted for the first time by her corrupter-destroyer.

While Lamb-Hide deliberately recalls Jekyll-Hyde, her adventures in her alter egos also rather unpleasantly recall de Sade and de Sade's Justine. The author seems to cast himself in the roles of both her original corrupter and the detective Prince, her final judge. Not all readers will agree with Martin Amis that writing a novel is necessarily a sado-masochistic process, but the force and brilliance of his speculation are undeniable. —CHARLES NICOL

Mourners Below
by James Purdy
The Viking Press, 304 pp., $13.95

FOR ALL its emotional bluster, James Purdy's mannered novel of *Sturm und Drang* in the underbelly of middle America is pregnant less with id than with idiosyncracy. Set in an attenuated version of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, *Mourners Below* is a Freudian fable of guilt, death, and transfiguration in a supposedly ordinary family.

While Eugene Bledsoe, a small-town attorney, putters idly through his days brooding over his sons Douglas and Justin who died in "the war," his remaining son, Duane, becomes the focus of his resentment. Interaction between the two is restricted to manic-depressive histrionics: either shouting matches or lachrymose bouts of self-pity. In more ways than one, the dead are the sole vitalizing force of the household (and the novel). As the ghosts of Douglas and Justin begin appearing to Duane, he feels compelled to reconcile his father to their demise and to hallow their memory in the town. At the prodding of Justin, he proceeds to impregnate Justin's former love. Returning from his tryst, Duane is assaulted by two cackling rustics who bugger him with a broom handle. He survives to become the adoptive father of the child,

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"destined to do nothing but raise a son."

Purdy's conceits are ill-stitched patches of O'Neill's familial *angst*. Pretentious utterances, clichés, and non-sequiturs turn his ill-conceived and awkwardly executed gallery of bellowing mourners into an unintentional comedy. —DAVID BELL

Customs
by Lisa Zeidner
Alfred A. Knopf, 272 pp., $11.95

IN LISA ZEIDNER'S first novel, Jennifer Spell, a former prodigy and daughter of a musician and a suicide, befriends Mildred, a wealthy bag lady, in a Grand Central luncheonette. Mildred tells Jennifer about the mythical French town of Tourisme, which, after many years of solitude broken only by an occasional ax murder, has produced a web of incestuous relationships that would be improbable even in Appalachia. As it turns out, the mothers of both Mildred and Jennifer are related through Tourisme, and upon Mildred's death, Jennifer is left to dispose of Mildred's fortune in art.

Written in a style that suggests a foot race between Colette and Raymond Chandler, *Customs* is a repository of mediocre epigrams. Bad lines ("Things have been tough since Adam and Eve broke their lease") are mingled with good lines ("The more cynical I become about the possibility of relationships, the more romantic I become on the sly"). Zeidner is best when she stays away from hipster one-liners and writes serious prose. The writing about suicide highlights a talent the rest of the garish novel obscures. At one point, Jennifer tells Mildred the problem with her story is, "You talk all right, but sometimes I'm not sure how it's supposed to pay off." Certainly the reader will have the same problem.

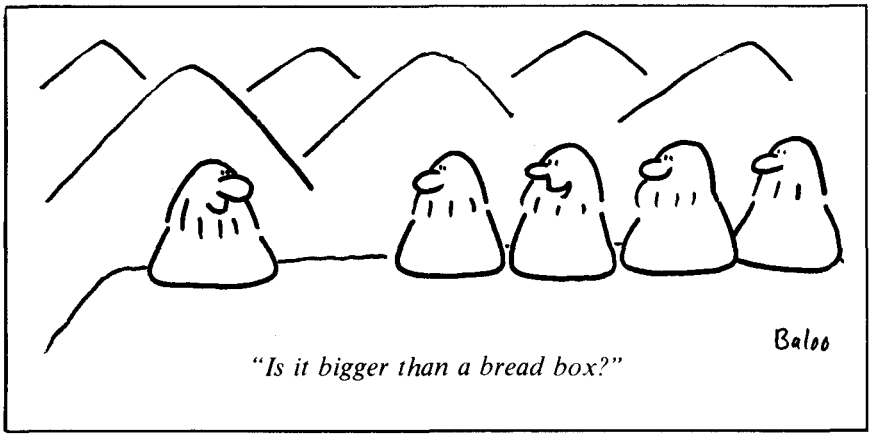
—JOHN BUCKLEY

The Temptation of Eileen Hughes
by Brian Moore
Farrar, Straus & Giroux
186 pp., $11.95

THE BEST that can be said for Brian Moore's new novel is that he has done, probably without intending to, something that no one has done before: He has turned the Gothic romance inside out. His heroine Eileen Hughes, protegée of the lord of a North Ireland manor and his predatory wife, does not find herself falling helplessly, hopelessly, throbbingly in love with her brooding, sensitive, troubled employer. Quite the opposite; *he* falls helplessly, hopelessly, throbbingly in love with *her*—for no clear reason—and chases her all over London, where the three star-crossed types have gone for a vacation. Eileen's problem is not denying the forbidden love, but finding some effective way of discouraging it. How she does this, while maturing from an impressionable virgin to a self-possessed woman, is what is meant to hold our interest.

Perhaps if Moore had thought to create more vividly observed characters to sit over fewer cups of tea, he might have produced a book as moving as his first novel, *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*. Or possibly if he had turned the screws of his plot another half-revolution, he might have achieved an amusing parody. But these are perhapses. The reality is that in *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes*, Moore has failed to probe very deeply.

—DAVID FINKLE



"Is it bigger than a bread box?"

Nonfiction Briefs

National Defense
by James Fallows
Random House, 206 pp., $12.95

IN HIS INTRODUCTION, James Fallows likens the theorizing of our defense intellectuals to the speculations of Jonathan Swift's Laputan philosophers. The analogy is apt and sets the stage for his provocative critique of the U.S. defense establishment.

In Fallows's view, we live in a world of economic constraint and explosive international change. In order to survive in such a world we must rethink our assumptions about defense. In particular, we must reexamine the "managerial" ethic that became entrenched during Robert McNamara's tenure at the Pentagon. Fallows argues that corporate mentality has led to tactics based on oversimplified, abstract models; that it has burdened us with a costly and irrational weapons culture; that its civilian "careerist" values have undermined the integrity of the officer corps; and that its "labor market incentives" have not produced a very efficient or cohesive volunteer army.

Fallows makes his case out of extensive interviews, anecdotes, and case histories. He touches all bases and weapons. In doing so, he manages to steer clear of most hawk/dove ideological disputes. In all, a valuable and refreshing perspective. Fallows for Secretary of Defense.

—JOHN S. PETERSON

The Lord God Made Them All
by James Herriot
St. Martin's Press, 373 pp., $13.95

JAMES HERRIOT is a pleasant but unremarkable country veterinarian from Yorkshire, who tells pleasant but unremarkable stories about the unhurried life of the dales and fells. As a stylist, he is casual and unpretentious, a bit given to cliché and sentimentality, but with a gift for sketching indelible characters—just the sort of storyteller you'd like to have sharing your fireplace and hoisting a snifter of brandy with you.

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The author was probably lucky rather than shrewd when he penned his first book, *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, and found that it struck just the right nostalgic chord with the reading public. But he clearly knows the vein he is working by now, and the vein seems to be playing out. The current volume consists of incidents drawn from Herriot's experiences immediately after World War II, plus the diaries of two uneventful trips he took during the Sixties, arbitrarily interspersed with the older material. Herriot's readers will be disappointed to discover that the unaffected charm that made his stories popular in the first place has now become a carefully reproduced commodity.

— PHILLIP JOHNSON

The World Challenge
by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber
Simon & Schuster, 384 pp., $14.95

JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER caused a flap among Europeans in the early Sixties by telling them they should shed their traditional condescension toward the U.S. and heed the "American challenge" of managerial efficiency and high productivity. Twenty years later he sees America itself failing to meet that challenge, which he now finds exemplified by Japan. But Japan does not alone represent the "world challenge." There is also OPEC, the Third World, and the emergence of post-industrial society, which together, Servan-Schreiber believes, make necessary a global system of economic development concentrating on computers.

If this sounds like a dry and rather commonplace analysis, don't stop there. Servan-Schreiber laces it neatly through an arresting and frequently dramatic narrative of how the new challenge arose on the wings of technological resourcefulness and political defiance, and how the old powers waned through arrogance and lack of foresight. Nor does the story end with forebodings of doom: If the world challenge is met, mankind will have full employment, universal affluence, and global cooperation.

One must hope this utopia comes to pass. But for all his nifty narration and sharp criticism, Servan-Schreiber lets oversimplification seriously weaken his case—did Japan's economic ascen-

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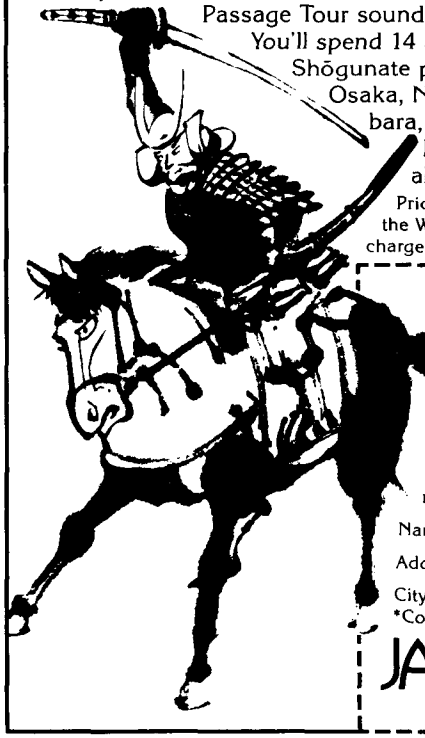

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dency truly come from intelligence alone? Will computers really lay our conflicts and failures to rest? As contemporary history, *The World Challenge* makes rewarding reading; as a prescription for tomorrow, it offers a doubtful cure. —JAMES SLOAN ALLEN

Will's Boy
by Wright Morris
Harper & Row, 208 pp., $10.95

THE STRIPPED PROSE of *Will's Boy* belies the riches to be found within it. In this memoir—Wright Morris's first book since last year's award-winning novel *Plains Song*—the writer-photographer has distilled his first 20 years into a prose album of the best photographs he never took.

Born in Central City, Nebraska, in 1910 to a mother who died six days later, the quick-witted, adaptable Morris spent his youth crisscrossing the country with his cocky, luckless father. Among the episodes Morris recounts are a journey from Chicago to Los Angeles in a series of increasingly exhausted automobiles; an exhibition baseball game during which the frenzied Morris runs out on the field and rips off Babe Ruth's back pocket; and a kiss from Marie of Rumania.

Of his tandem careers, Morris has written elsewhere, "Through writing, through the effort to visualize, I became a photographer, and through my experience as a photographer I became more of a writer." This is a very modest self-assessment from a man who, with each successive work, reveals himself to be an inextricable part of the American literary landscape. —DAVID FINKLE

"Benihana of Scarsdale"

Bestsellers: A Nostalgic Celebration of the Less Than Great Books You Have Always Been Afraid to Admit You Loved
by Geoffrey Bocca
Wyndham Books, 256 pp., $12.95

IN THIS celebration of the "camp" classics like *Tarzan* and *Forever Amber*, which everyone reads and then denies having read, Bocca leads us through a reevaluation of 15 pre-World War II "hits" that are generally ignored today, mostly with good reason. The books Bocca chooses offer nostalgia but little else. Among them are *Beau Geste*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *The Virginian*, *The Green Hat*, *Tarzan*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, and *Forever Amber*.

Bocca, however, has a generally good time searching for literary merit among literature's apemen and in posing such questions as "Was Lady Jane faithful to Tarzan?" (The answer: probably not.) One can quarrel with Bocca's choice of books and one can wish as well that he had blue-penciled out his references to how some of these books affected his adolescent sexuality, but all-in-all Bocca leads us on a literary romp worth taking.

—ARTHUR SPIEGELMAN

Within the Whirlwind
by Eugenia Ginzburg
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
367 pp., $12.50

IN 1937, Eugenia Ginzburg, a Russian teacher and journalist, was arrested by Communist Party authorities and condemned to 10 years in the prison camps of eastern Siberia. Her crime was omitting to denounce a friend who had become a target of one of Stalin's sweeping purges. In *Within the Whirlwind*, sequel to her highly praised memoir *Journey Into the Whirlwind*, the story of Ginzburg's life as an enemy of the state—a life of slave labor and unimaginable deprivation—is continued up to her release and reinstatement into the Party's good graces.

What makes this memoir unforgettable, though, is not the natural power of her tale—the imagination of the age is jaded by atrocity—but the rare and precious nature of the witness herself. Silently quoting poetry in the fearful watches of the night, falling in love

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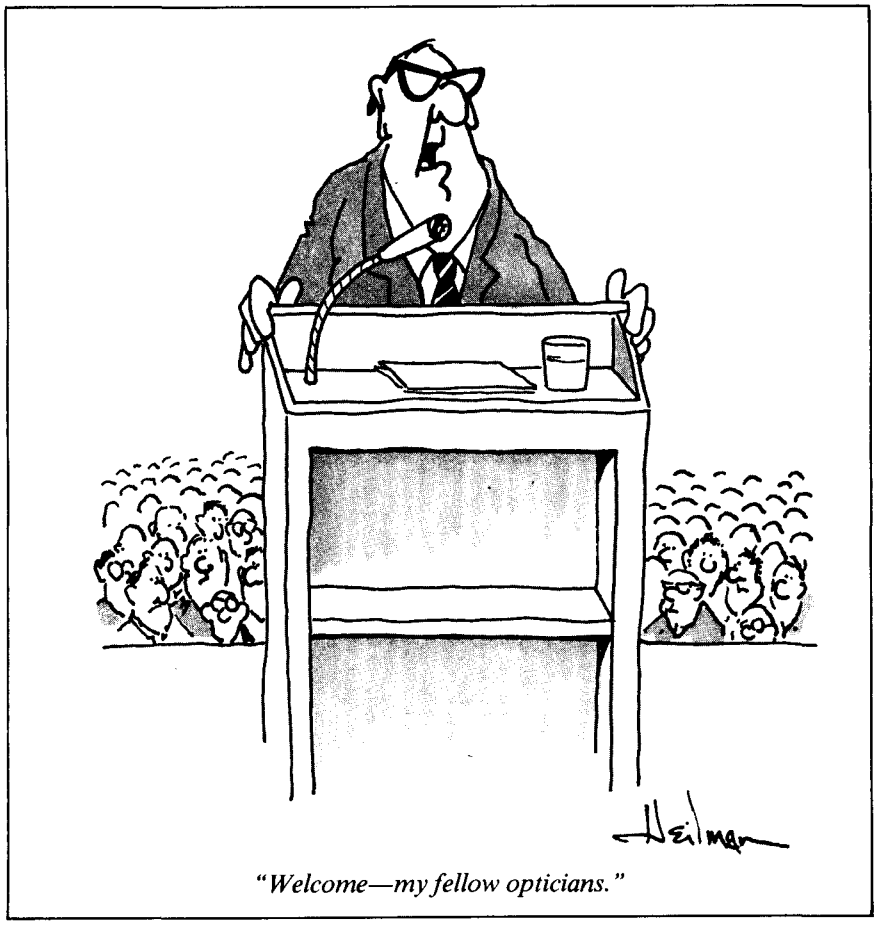
amidst the dying and the dead, Ginzburg is the kind of inspiration the human race barely deserves. She refuses to scourge us with her misery, and yet insists on feeding us with her hopes. In this dark era, when so many thinkers are content to sink blithely beneath the waves of history without even grasping at the straw of poetry, the "flickering candle" of Ginzburg's "spirituality" shines, by contrast, very bright indeed.

—ANDREW KLAVAN

New Rules: The Way We Were, the Way We Are, the Way We're Going to Be
by Daniel Yankelovich
Random House, 320 pp., $15.95

DANIEL YANKELOVICH would like to make narcissism respectable again. He is convinced that the current turn toward hedonism and introspection is only the first, perhaps inevitably excessive phase of a revolutionary effort to humanize industrial society. He writes in a plain, brisk style, drawing on personal interviews, oral histories, and his own respected survey polls to document the shifting values of Americans who are no longer willing to sacrifice their own pleasure for the well-being of their families. What emerges is an often poignant picture of people struggling with the impossible demands of what they see as their "duty" to be happy—working wives, single parents, fugitives from the competitive "rat race"—many of whom do not know what to do with their new freedom.

Yankelovich celebrates their questioning and courage, but sternly criticizes the self-absorption that has left many Americans unprepared to face the current economic crisis. His economic diagnosis is sobering and forcefully written, although perhaps somewhat over-simplified in its scolding claim that inflation is above all a "moral" or psychological problem that could easily be overcome if we were all less preoccupied with satisfying ourselves. He shows persuasively that "self-fulfillment" need not be a solitary pursuit, but his vision of the "caring"



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and "commitment" that could grow from our concern with ourselves seems more hopeful than convincing.

—TAMAR JACOBY

They Shoot Canoes, Don't They?
by Patrick F. McManus
Holt, Rinehart & Winston
228 pp., $12.95

WHEN PATRICK McMANUS was a boy, he tells us in his second collection of comic essays on the great outdoors, he yearned for a Labrador retriever but owned instead a dog (of sorts) named Strange, who could inspire utter revulsion by initiating a conspicuously gross course of self-treatment for rectal itch. As a teenager, McManus lures a girl into the woods with the promise of doing "something you've never done before"; "something" turns out to be shooting grouse. By adulthood, married now, he has moved on to the illicit pleasures of secretly fileting perch with another man's wife.

Some other McManus offerings: a history of live bait, in which he carries his inquiry to the kitchens of Genghis Khan; a hunter's dictionary (to hunters, " 'five minutes' covers a period ranging from five minutes to eight days"); and "Psychic Powers for Outdoorsmen." It would be a pity to overlook this book. McManus can make you laugh even if you can't distinguish a duck blind from a Buddhist shrine. His folksy, down-home style of yarn spinning, however, may leave readers attuned to a darker, more purposeful comic voice impatient.

—JOHN TARKOV

Played Out: The Jean Seberg Story
by David Richards
Random House, 371 pp. $13.95

IT WAS 1956 and she was 17, an unspoiled small-town girl from Iowa who was catapulted to international fame when Otto Preminger chose her over 18,000 others in a worldwide talent hunt to play St. Joan. Barely out of high school, actress Jean Seberg found herself keeping company with Peggy Ashcroft, Laurence Olivier, and other greats of the English theater. She lunched with Charles de Gaulle, became friends with André Malraux, and dated Harry Belafonte who sang "My Funny Valentine" to her by a Paris fountain.

It was a Cinderella story come true—or so it seemed. She also underwent serious bouts of loneliness and suffered under Preminger's heavy-handed direction. During the Seventies, she was the target of a FBI smear campaign because of her friendship with the Black Panthers. This, some say, finally destroyed her. In 1979, at the age of 40, she committed suicide.

David Richards writes with sympathy, but his sympathy does not distort. The book is delightful reading, laced with revealing vignettes of an idealistic and compassionate woman.

—DONALD T. ROTUNDA

Class: A View From Middle England
by Jilly Cooper
Alfred A. Knopf, 252 pp., $12.95

THE ENGLISH have been pondering the notion of class at least since 1381 when John Ball, a leader of the Peasant's Revolt, coined his famous couplet: "When Adam dolve and Eve span,/ Who was then the gentleman?"

Jilly Cooper, a columnist for the (London) *Sunday Times*, attempts to fathom the answer, a task she compares with "trying to catalogue the sea." Only briefly threatened by the egalitarian Sixties, Cooper assures us that the class system continues to thrive in Britain. To prove her point, *Class* offers a pantheon of prototypes—Harry Stow-Crat, Jen Teales, Mr. and Mrs. Nouveau-Richards, among others—to guide us through the labyrinthine Anglo-Saxon attitudes of England's various social classes. Areas scrutinized include children (look at their hairdos), appearances, sex ("impotence and sodomy are socially O.K., but birth control is flagrantly middle class"), dogs, and the arts (the lower classes think Verdi's *Requiem* is a restaurant).

Although Cooper's intent seems to have been partially a serious one, the entertainment value of *Class* far outdistances its claim to originality or depth of perception. But as America prepares to witness Prince Charles's upcoming nuptials on the "telly" (a decidedly non-U word), *Class* may prove an indispensable program for distinguishing the players from mere spectators.

ANN GENEVA

"I'm not able to fire you Douglas because of your seniority—so I'm going to shoot you."

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Thomas H. Middleton

Questions of Degree

It's that time of year when hordes of young people graduate high school and college to go on to greater achievements in academia or the hurly burly of life in the outside world.

If that sentence didn't make you cringe just a little bit, you are probably young enough to have grown up hearing phrases like "to graduate high school" and "to graduate college." To my own generation, a school graduates a student; a student does not graduate a school. What a student does is to graduate *from* a school. Yet in recent years, we've heard and read countless phrases like, "The bride, who graduated Mount Holyoke in 1973..." and people like me marvel at this wonderful era, when a young woman can graduate an entire college.

None of my older dictionaries dignifies "to graduate college" with a mention, nor do the relatively new *WNI III* and *Webster's New World* (2nd. Ed.). *American Heritage* has a note, "*She graduated college* is termed unacceptable by 93 percent of the panel [on usage]." *Random House*, though, gives it full recognition: It says *graduate* can mean, "To graduate from. *She graduated college in 1950.*"

You can count me with the 93 percent of the *American Heritage* panel, but I have the uncomfortable feeling that *Random House* is being realistic and that in time this weird locution will no longer make us cringe.

Poking about in dictionaries can lead one on unexpected journeys in the mind, and while I was scouting the *graduate* territory I was sidetracked to *thermometer*. This diversion was not entirely unpredictable, since both graduates and thermometers have degrees. I realize that that sounds like an irredeemably rotten pun, but in fact it is more reasonable than it appears. One sort of graduate is a graduated container, usually of glass, used for measuring. I had forgotten about those graduates, but we used them in high school chemistry classes. *Graduate* is one of that vast number of commonplace words we never give second thoughts to unless we hear them used in unfamiliar ways, such as, "He picked up the graduate, drained it in one gulp, and smashed it in the fireplace," or, "The bride graduated Yale."

Contemplating those two *graduates*, one can't fail to see that what they have in common is degrees. For the first time, I looked at *graduate* with a thought to its relationship to *grade*, *gradual*, and *gradation*. One of *grade*'s meanings is *degree*, and under *degree*, *WNI II* lists "a grade or rank to which scholars are admitted by a college or university, in recognition of their attainments." It also says a degree is "a division, space, or interval marked on a mathematical or other instrument, as on a thermometer."

I marvel when a young woman can graduate an entire college.

I doubt that I'm unusual in having thought of a college degree as something quite unrelated to a thermometer degree except in regard to spelling and pronunciation. The fact is that my perception of what a college degree is has always been somewhat wide of the mark. I checked with half a dozen college students and graduates and found that they all had precisely the same misperception as my own. We all thought of a college degree as something suitable for framing that the dean handed you on graduation day. The fact is that the *degree* is "a grade or rank" and is quite unframable, and that the sheepskin is a *diploma*, a document testifying that you have attained the degree. That is a nice distinction, but I think it is worth noting.

My brief foray into *degree* brought me to *third degree* and a rather radical digression to a truly incomprehensible bit of etymology. *Random House* says of *third degree*: "1. *Chiefly U.S.* intensive questioning or rough treatment, esp. by the police, in order to get information or a confession. 2. the degree of master mason in Freemasonry." Mencken, in *The American Language*, says that our *third degree*, which evokes the back rooms of police stations, burly arms, and rubber hoses, is borrowed from Freemasonry. Whence the connection springs is puzzling to me. My only personal contact with masons, as masons, happened many years ago in New York. I had heard that Shriners' conventions featured cattle prods in elevators and bags of water tossed from hotel rooms. But I found myself surrounded by Shriners during one of their big blowouts, one thing led to another, and I wound up carousing through an entire evening of hilarity, Dixieland jazz, dozens of red fezzes, and a decidedly unhealthful amount of booze. I couldn't imagine any of those particular Shriners fooling with cattle prods, water bags, or any other boorishness, much less trying to beat a confession out of a prisoner.

I would be grateful if a knowledgeable Freemason, Shriner or not, would enlighten me as to the possible connection between a master mason and a pummeling with rubber hose. I bet that Mencken was simply speculating, but if he was, and he was wrong, where *did* our *third degree* come from? ■

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THEATER

Stanley Kauffmann

New Beckett, Old Bacall

The most recent play by the world's greatest living dramatist runs 15 minutes. Samuel Beckett wrote **Rockaby** in response to a request from Dan Labeille who teaches theater, film, and TV at Cayuga County Community College of the State University of New York. In the fall of 1979 Labeille wrote to Beckett, announcing that SUNY was planning a celebration of the Nobel laureate's 75th birthday in 1981, and he invited Beckett to contribute. In June 1980 Labeille received the manuscript of *Rockaby*. A pretty good morning's mail, one might say.

Funding was found both for a professional production and a TV-taping of the production. The play is for only one performer, a woman, and the English actress Billie Whitelaw was engaged. Whitelaw had done the London premiere of Beckett's *Not I*, and he had written *Footfalls* for her. The American Alan Schneider, a Beckett familiar, directed the world premiere of *Rockaby* at SUNY in Buffalo in April 1981, where it was taped. The production was then given three performances at La Mama in Manhattan and was taken to Paris. (Because of the brevity of *Rockaby*, Whitelaw preceded each performance with a reading of Beckett's odd love story, "Enough.")

Rockaby is one more of Beckett's border crossings. Conceive of the crossing from life to death as a border between countries; conceive, too, that it is possible to see across before going, to float above the border a bit, and to itemize one's final hope and hopelessness, memories and bitterness and joy and relief, as if in a customs declaration done in the form of a laconic poem. Under this conception would come such recent short Beckett plays as *That Time*, *Footfalls*, *Not I* (one woman speaker), *A Piece of Monologue* (one man), and *Rockaby* (one woman). Further, as has been his concern since *Krapp's Last Tape*, Beckett is trying to "disembody" the voice, to make the voice a self that can speak to the self that contains it, the self that has been perhaps repressing it. In *Krapp's Last Tape* an old man listens to recordings of himself when young. But in *Not I* the Mouth, which is presumably part of the Auditor, seems to have attained independence *at that moment* from the Auditor, a hooded figure of "undeterminable" sex; one of Mouth's few pauses in the play comes as Mouth "recovers from vehement refusal to relinquish third person." This idea of "disembodiment" recurs in *Rockaby*.

Whitelaw in *Rockaby*, Beckett's "customs declaration" on the journey into death.

The play opens as all of Beckett's plays open—with an arresting theatrical image. Alone in a circle of light, seated in a rocker with her feet on a footrest, is a "prematurely old" woman with "unkempt grey hair" and "huge eyes in white expressionless face." Her costume: "Black lacy high-necked evening gown. Long sleeves. Jet sequins to glitter when rocking." After a long pause, she speaks the single word "More." Her chair rocks, and her recorded voice is heard. After a few minutes, the words and the rocking stop. Again after a long pause, she speaks the word "More"; more recorded words and rocking for a few minutes. There are four such sections in all, each begun by her speaking the same word and followed by recorded monologue, each a bit longer than the previous section. At the end, her voice and the lights fade, as the rocking stops.

Each of the four recorded sections begins with the words "till in the end" or "so in the end"; each is in the third person; each is in short lines as of verse; each contains the ambiguous phrase "time she stopped." The three later sections contain much of what was in the first section, adding or altering, so that the effect is incremental.

The first section tells us that at the "close of a long day" she was looking

> high and low
> for another
> another creature like herself. . . .
> another living soul
> one other living soul

The search continues through the other sections (says the voice, as the silent old

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woman rocks), but she is at last at her window

facing other windows
other only windows

In the closing section she goes "down the steep stair" and discovers that she

was her own other
own other living soul

She is done with rocking, says her voice now, as the rocking slows. Having realized her complete solitude, her solitary completeness, that she is "her own other," she says

fuck life
stop her eyes
rock her off
rock her off

And the play ends.

Its delicate cumulative quality, its oboe-like winding toward the revelation of absolute loneliness, the shock of the consequent obscene renunciation of existence, the end of rocking felt as the end of her pulse—all these I discerned from the printed page. (*Rockaby and Other Short Pieces*, just published by Grove Press.) None of these subtle beauties is achieved or even outlined in the performance directed by Schneider. Whitelaw's recorded voice just chants, not always intelligibly, with no inflection of growth or resolution, no clarity of design. It's all blind Beckett worship, not acute Beckett performance. Schneider has had long experience with Beckett, but experience is not equivalent to sensibility. I wish that a better performance—perhaps with Whitelaw under a better director—had been taped. *Rockaby* does not open new reaches in Beckett, but it's a valuable bead for his unique rosary of lasting last rites.

Back to the "real" world. At the new musical **Woman of the Year**, I felt I was sitting at the end of a Detroit assembly line, watching a 1981 model roll off, a somewhat revamped version of previous products. What they had restyled here was a 1942 Katharine Hepburn-Spencer Tracy film comedy about a woman political columnist and a male sports writer, changed here to a big TV interviewer and a cartoonist. They switched the upholstery, but they forgot to reshape the body; the basic conflict now seems corny as handled: a woman's choice between marriage and career. And the chromium finish—the score by John Kander and Fred Ebb—was cut on old, old patterns. (There are some animated cartoon sequences that don't fit my automobile analogy, but they don't help the show much either.)

Every moment is full of show-biz vigor, almost every moment is flat. All the songs are in predictable shapes—ballad, rhythm, comic, etc.—and not one of them gets past your outer ear. But there is a duet between the glitzy TV star and a housewrappered *hausfrau* played by Marilyn Cooper in which Cooper's dry timing manages to tickle a little. Harry Guardino, who plays the glamour girl's cartoonist lover, has lost some of the comic macho ease that he had in films like *Houseboat*.

The only really interesting aspect of the show is sociological. Lauren Bacall, here the TV biggie, was once a hot film star because of her sexy face and voice. In 1965, those days past, she played on Broadway in *Cactus Flower*, with her sex appeal gone, she was left only with an amateurism that would have been just pardonable in a college show. But her film fame and her gossip-column social reputation—ex-wife of Bogey, flamboyantly outspoken personality, etc.—lent her a certain confidence. In *Applause* (1970) the offstage reputation had grown and so had the onstage assurance, but this only made the performance at the center of all the hoopla seem increasingly inept. Now Bacall is more confident than ever, more carefully coached, more "admirable" because at the age of 56 she lets herself be thrown around by dancers, but she is not a whit more truly and competently professional. Her dancing is a joke, her singing is miked-up party stuff, her acting is mere parlor sophistication writ large. If you can remember the scintillating Rosalind Russell in *Wonderful Town* and *Auntie Mame*, you can see that Bacall is an amateur buoyed up by her offstage persona of TV commercials and magazine ads, by her reputation as a hard-hitting political liberal and a no-nonsense dame. But apparently most of the audience are thrilled to spend two and a half hours in the presence of an incompetent woman just because they'd like to be on a first-name basis with her and be able to call her up. ■

MARTHA SWOPE

Lauren Bacall sings about being "One of the Boys" in *Woman of the Year*.

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FILM

Judith Crist

Russian Schmaltz

No doubt about it: Nice people—or, if you prefer, ordinary people—are the going thing on screen at the moment, as 75 million Russians can attest and multitudes of Americans are about to.

For the Russians, the testament came with **Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears**, the Mosfilm Studio production that walked off with the Oscar as the Best Foreign Language film of 1980. To the astonishment of all but those Motion Picture Academy voters able to preview it, this Russian nominee beat out Truffaut's *The Last Métro*, Kurosawa's *Kagemusha*, and Istvan Szabo's *Confidence* (all shown publicly), as well as a second unknown quantity, *The Nest*, from Spain. And now that the Soviet film is in distribution, its selection remains an astonishment, while its status as the most popular film ever shown in the USSR becomes perfectly clear. We have here pure Hollywood slick-schmaltz, a blend of 1932's *Three on a Match*, 1954's *Three Coins in a Fountain*, and 1946's *To Each His Own*.

Tears is the story of three roommates (one an unmarried mother, no less) and how they grow into three women who have loved and lost and suffered and laughed and loved—because Moscow may not believe in tears but—and there's a title ballad to reassure us—it does believe in love. Refreshingly and forthrightly, this comedy-drama has a contemporary setting, though it starts out in 1958. Serious, studious Katerina (Vera Alentova), flirty, flighty Liudmila (Irina Muravyova), and sweet, sturdy Antonina (Raisa Ryazanova), all fresh from the country, are rooming together in a Moscow workers' dormitory. To Liudmila, "Moscow's a lottery where you can win first prize"; she works in a bakery but poses as a student to snag herself a professional or at least "intellectual" beau. Katerina is a factory worker but is studying to become a chemist, while Antonina has no aspirations beyond her steady country-bumpkin boyfriend.

Before long, Liudmila has found herself a star hockey player; Katerina is being romanced by a TV cameraman (in 20 years, he assures her, there will be "no films, no books, no theater—nothing but television"); and Antonina is getting married. At the wedding, Katerina's eating pickles like mad and—yes, the TV man's a cad, but Katerina's going through with having the baby and studying her chemistry.... Fade out with an alarm clock.

Fade in with an alarm clock. It's 1978 and Katerina is the "stern but just" director of a factory with 3,000 workers under her, and her daughter is a pretty teenager. Liudmila's hockey player has turned into a nonproductive drunk and they're divorced, but Liudmila is still hoping to "win," because now "life is a lottery." Antonina is still happily married, with three sturdy sons. Then Katerina meets an honest factory worker whose only flaw is a prejudice against "executives." Their love is just blooming when, would you believe, a television crew comes to her office and behind the camera is....

Hollywood stopped making this kind of movie about 20 years ago, and one can only assume that the Academy voters were benumbed by nostalgia at Oscar time. And truth to tell, there is something so beguilingly innocent about the characters, so intelligent about the performances, so basically interesting about the sociology of Moscow's working-class class system, and so universal in the romantic relationships, that the movie is hard to resist on its own level. The director, Vladimir Menshov, has a light touch, a wry eye for foibles, and an affectionate way with satire. Détente gets a boost thereby, courtesy of nice people.

Alan Alda has voiced resentment at being labeled "nice"—but it is the handiest word for this most popular of television stars and for his work. His newest film, the first in which he functions as director, the second (after *The Seduction of Joe Tynan*) in which he serves as star and as writer, is sleekly upper-middle-class and, courtesy of both content and cast, very easy to like. **Four Seasons** deals with the relationships of three New York City couples, each with one child in college, who have been spending seasonal vacations together for about seven years. This spring, one couple breaks up; on the summer sailing trip, the husband brings along the nubile airline stewardess who is his new love; on the fall trip, the ex-wife turns up as well; on the winter ski vacation, the lovers are married, the new wife pregnant.

With this simple and pat plot device, Alda has chosen to explore the changing "seasons" in friendship, between spouses as well as companions, examining the stresses and strains, the tolerance and the abrasion, the controls and releases that are allowed in intimacy and in propinquity. And we arrive—to the surprise of only the more benighted among us—at the conclusion that relationships are not easy, concessions and effort must be made because, as Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* made clear, we need the "eggs."

Revelation is not the reward of this film. The satisfaction lies in the familiarity of the situations, in the neat, pseudo-sophisticated "civilized" one-liners of which Alda is master, and in the personalities on hand. Once again, Alda offers himself as a flawed man, portraying a

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Muravyova and Alentova in an engaging Soviet equivalent of Hollywood schmaltz.

glib lawyer given to perpetual probe-and-theorizing, making a fetish of self-control, a man stabilized by his wife's wisdom; the wife is Carol Burnett, cool, forthright, an organized magazine editor, perhaps a bit too collected. Equally "stable" are Jack Weston, a successful dentist, miserly, slightly paranoid, his hypochondria stimulated by a sense of aging, and his wife, Rita Moreno, a vital artist given to emphasizing and exercising her Italian temperament. Len Cariou is the successful insurance man suddenly intent on a new life; Sandy Dennis is his off-beat bemused photographer-wife introverted and unaware, and Bess Armstrong is her "young, beautiful, adoring" successor.

Unfortunately, the script verbalizes the obvious with the same care with which the slapstick moments and physical jokes are set up by the director. The emphasis—much like that of the Russian film—is on the ordinary niceness of people, frail and flawed though they may be. And while they seem to risk talking their friendship to death, they remain friends. It's ingratiating. A pity it's not exhilarating.

There's nothing very nice about anybody in **Death Hunt**, a rough, tough, top-of-the-world manhunt that takes on special stature with Lee Marvin and Charles Bronson, a couple of archetypical stars who can afford to flavor their macho with humor and humanity, and they do, giving a glow to the engrossing fact-based story.

The film gets off to a violent start—we are, we learn early on, dealing with the human dregs of a Depression-ridden continent who've made their way to the Canadian Northwest Territory to eke out a living as trappers. But when it settles down to a steady chase, with Canadian Mountie Marvin on the trail of Bronson, who left some bodies behind in Rat River—purely in self-defense—it's all ice-and-snow adventure. The director, Peter Hunt, has scattered a number of funny and raunchy bits and pieces and period touches around—and for lagniappe there's Angie Dickinson back in Rat River, the coolest widow ever to come to collect a corpse and find consolation.

Diane Kurys, the French writer-director who gave us the delightful *Peppermint Soda* two years ago, offers a sequel, **Cocktail Molotov**. Like all second drinks, it doesn't quite carry the kick of the first, a charming story of a bourgeois adolescence in Paris in the early Sixties. This time, alas, Kurys is concerned with rebellious youth, personified by 18-year-old Anne.

With lovely Elise Caron as her alter ego, Kurys tells of the girl's personal rebellion, a quarrel with her mother over an arty boyfriend, her departure with him and a friend determined to join an Israeli kibbutz in 1968. The trio gets as far as Venice and then, hearing of the May student uprising, decides to return to Paris. There's loss of virginity, pregnancy, an abortion along the way, a vivid recreation of a France half-paralyzed by strikes, shortages, and violence. But one questions the "niceness" of young people—whom Kurys obviously thinks charming—who are indifferent to their parents' needs and crises, who finance their own revolt out of mommy's pocketbook, and set out on their second "rebellion" by helping themselves to the family car. There's little perspective on the total self-absorption at hand. ■

Alda (with Burnett) is as pseudo-sophisticated as ever in his directorial debut.

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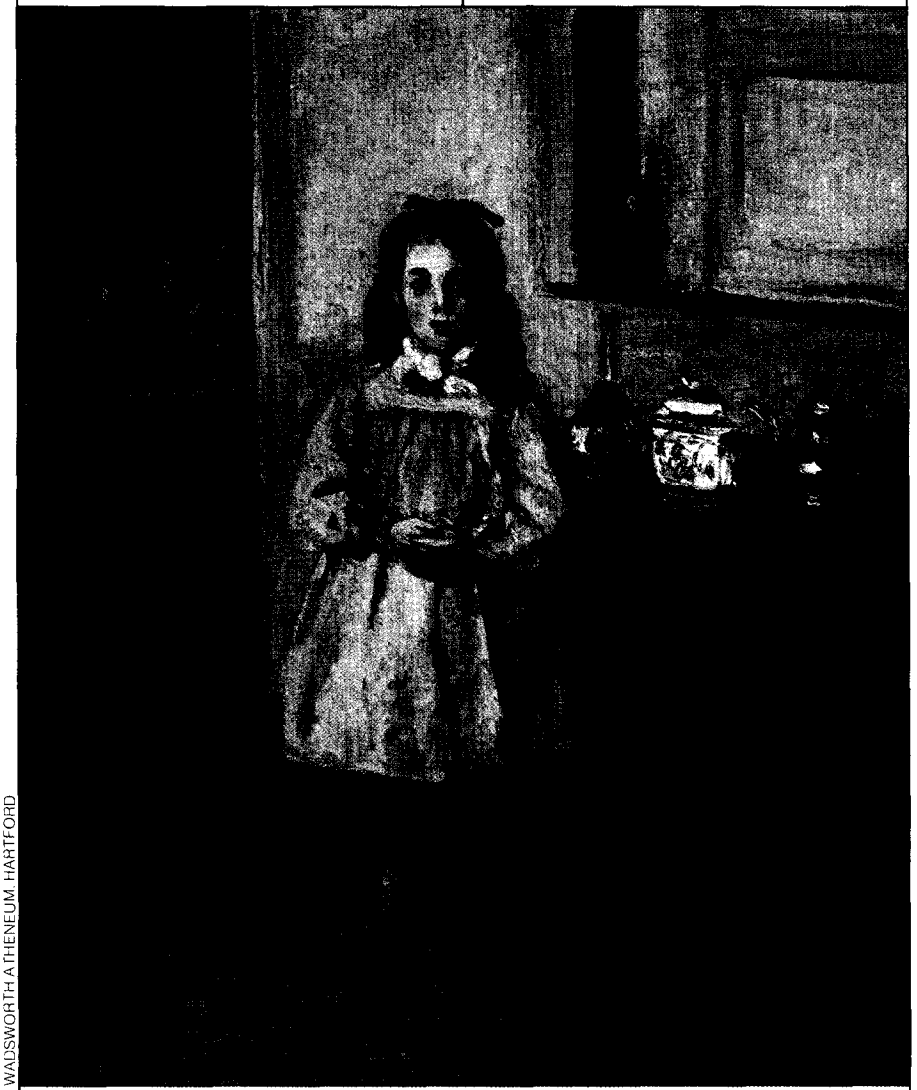
ART

Carter Ratcliff

Pissarro's Distinction

Of all the avant-garde movements, Impressionism is the only one to have gained wide popularity. Claude Monet is appreciated as a reliable source of attractive pictures, and Auguste Renoir's big-eyed children are a major addition to the repertoire of sentimentality. It's difficult for us to remember that the Impressionists were viciously condemned in their own time. Even specialists familiar with the details of the abuse and rejection suffered by Monet and company have to make a strenuous effort to imagine how an Impressionist afternoon could possibly have looked threatening to anyone, even the most rabid academic. This is a measure of the degree to which taste has changed since 1874, the year of the first Impressionist exhibition. The style has affected our very seeing so deeply that everyone in our time, whatever his taste, feels at home with the flicker of Impressionist light.



WADSWORTH ATHENEUM, HARTFORD

"Portrait of Minette, Standing" (c. 1872-3)—Pissarro's daughter who died at nine.

On May 19, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston opened a full-scale retrospective of paintings, drawings, and prints by **Camille Pissarro**, the only artist who showed in all eight official Impressionist exhibitions. Organized in conjunction with the Hayward Gallery in London and the Grand Palais, Paris, this exhibition shows the somber side of Impressionism. Monet's light glows on the surface of things. Pissarro's smolders from within. Renoir's women are prettily bourgeois, even (or especially) in his late "classical" period, which he devoted to bathing nudes. Pissarro's women are often peasants. They are solid, monumental figures, though the play of his colors often submerges them in their rural backgrounds. He treats people as if they were forces of nature, not personalities. He said of himself, "I have the temperament of a peasant, I am melancholy, coarse, and savage in my work."

Whatever savagery Pissarro possessed, he had to acquire on his own. He came from a solidly middle-class Jewish family. In 1824, his father, Frédéric, migrated from Bordeaux to St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. Camille was born there six years later, the third of four sons. After boarding school in France, he returned to St. Thomas, where he entered the family business. He had always made drawings, mostly landscapes. By the age of 21, he had become friends with a local painter, Fritz Melbye. Though it's often assumed that Pissarro was the student of Melbye, the few paintings that survive from this period suggest that Pissarro

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soon surpassed the work of the older artist. After two years of traveling and painting in Venezuela, Pissarro decided to return to France.

Melbye had provided an introduction to Camille Corot, dean of the Barbizon School, those painters who blended direct, out-of-doors observation with the elegance of high-style French landscape. After several seasons, Pissarro's friendship with Corot and others of the Barbizon group led to a meeting with Gustave Courbet, leader of the realist camp. Thus Pissarro entered his thirties associating with the art and artists in the forefront of the anti-academic forces. (At the time the officially recognized academics were busy, in a highly proficient but imitative way, keeping alive the art of previous centuries, producing 19th-century versions of Raphael and Poussin.)

In the mid-1860s, Pissarro showed at the yearly Paris Salons for the first time. His paintings from this phase of his career are among the finest he ever did—luminously gray-green landscapes in which even the clouds have an understated monumentality. The eye moves slowly into Pissarro's terrain, drawn this way and that by the subtleties of his touch but guided throughout by the sophisticated simplicity with which he builds his compositions. Pissarro's art is "savage" insofar as it shows him to be an artist willing to sacrifice polish in order to draw closer to the basics of his art. Corot had already done this, especially in his oil sketches. So had many of the Barbizon painters, while Courbet, in his highly self-conscious way, had attempted to primitivize his style for the sake of the real, the immediate, the humbly inelegant. It's easy to imagine Pissarro staying with his early style, in which case we'd think of him now as a third- or fourth-generation realist—distinguished but far from original. Then, in 1869, he met Claude Monet.

Pissarro moved with his family to Louveciennes, a small village north of Paris, where he worked side by side with Monet for the next two years. Renoir lived in Louveciennes too, as did Alfred Sisley, another member of the group soon to be known as Impressionists. All these young artists were pushing the premises of Barbizon and realism to extremes. As their brushwork got looser, they were able to make their response to the flow and sparkle of light all the more immediate. Composition—the traditional basis of pictorial design—often grew simpler, as their bright, atmospheric colors crowded across the surface of the canvas. In Monet's art, the boundaries of objects began to blur to the point where nothing feels solid. By the end of the 19th century, he was painting landscapes that can be read almost as abstractions. This makes him the most radical Impressionist, a precursor of Rothko, Still, and the color-field painters. Pissarro, by contrast, found a way to make the Impressionist figure as solid as it had been in his late-Barbizon phase. There is always a strong sense that the rocks are heavy, earth is damp, flesh covers sturdy muscles.

No matter how delicately it flickers, Pissarro's brush stroke never runs away from the sober side of the color range. While Monet's palette heads toward pinks, magentas, and light oranges, Pissarro's is anchored by dark greens, earthy beiges, and heavy blues—thus his remark on his "melancholy" nature. Still, the solidity of Pissarro's Impressionism is not a function of temperament alone. He continued to make preparatory drawings for paintings long after Monet and Sisley had given them up. And he worked closely with Edgar Degas, that ironic classicist, in experimenting with etchings and aquatints—a facet of Pissarro's career that is especially well documented by the Boston retrospective. Pissarro's Impressionism is a deliberate, meditative style, with strong links to traditional values. As paradoxical as it may seem, he is a classicizing revolutionary. Pissarro's art teaches us that Impressionism's most radical impulses are, after all, variants on those which have guided art since the Renaissance. Monet's eye dispenses with all but the faintest vestiges of that heritage. Pissarro's art shows the Impressionist eye coming to terms with the heritage. ■

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Impressionism evolving from classicism: "The Backwoods of L'Hermitage, Pointoise" (1879).

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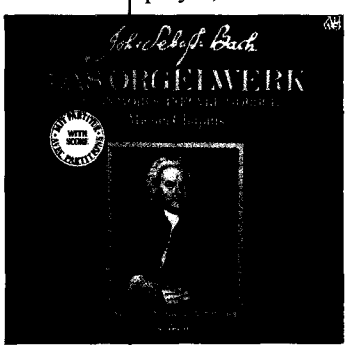
RECORDS

Stephen Wadsworth

Organic Bach

German organ technique was founded on and grew around the hymnody. The chorale was Bach's daily bread, his deepest source of musical association. The *Orgelbüchlein*, for instance, simple in effect but of the greatest and most delicate complexity of design, is an unfinished series of chorale treatments, ostensibly a workbook of organ technique. Dedicated to developing organists, God, and "the instruction of our fellow man," it is of course, much more—a sermon from the loft with its roots in the Reformation, and surely as sincere an article of his faith as Bach ever produced.

Bach may have wrestled with greater notions of worship in the virtuosic expanses of his great prelude-and-fugue couplings and other large compound pieces. There he pitted exhilaratingly, daringly free improvisatory fantasies against the organized clarity of some of his most vigorous fugues. In this oneness of opposites, this unity in diversity, Bach asked questions of his chorales, celebrating the conflicting forces of man's imperfect nature and the ambivalence inherent in his dialogue with a perfect God.



For the collector who wants to buy **Bach's organ works** whole, or for the organist who wants to play them all, the element of choice comes heavily into play. We have no sure way of knowing what tempos Bach chose or what stops he pulled when he played his own pieces for organ. We don't always know what organs he wrote for, what purpose this music was meant to serve, or even whether he wrote it all. And no champion of the organ ever wrote in as many styles over so long a period of time. What's right for a rhapsodic toccata—a particular instrument, organist, or sense of phrase—can hardly be right for a grave chorale written 40 years later.

All of which allows an organist a wide interpretive berth and leaves collectors with a concomitantly wide choice of recorded performances. The choices Peter Hurford has made for his unfolding cycle of Bach's organ works (Argo, eight 3-disc sets at $29.94)—sometimes very right-seeming, sometimes simply baffling—may strike other listeners quite differently from the way they strike me. Hurford, a gifted player, avoids rowdiness and sentimentality. He is fleet-fingered, often has a wonderfully light touch, and projects the metric mechanism and rhythmic movement of every piece with energy and unusual clarity. But his cycle is humorless, and that is its greatest weakness. We need to get away from the image of Bach as a lethargic fatso squinting and scratching at demonic two-ton fugues that either bore or terrify innocent churchgoers.

Moreover, most of the organs Hurford chooses to play—the one in the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows in Toronto, for instance—are strident or lack warmth or distinctive sound. Again, *chacun à son goût*, but no wonder their lady is sorrowful. Also, the instruments are recorded in such a way that we hear *their* sonorities but not the sonority of the organ resounding in its hallowed hall, which is fundamental to the effect of this music. The stagy scholarship of the notes and the questionable mixing, on every disc, of sonatas, fantasias, concertos, and so on from different periods and styles leave one without adequate orientation or information about either the music or the instruments.

Michel Chapuis has made a more satisfying, idiomatic recorded cycle of Bach's oeuvre for organ for Telefunken (ten 2-disc sets at $19.96). Each set deals principally with a different type of piece. The clear annotations even include exquisitely printed scores for all works. Several of the instruments used were alive when Bach was, and they all sound distinctive. (But why has no one undertaken a cycle based on the four or so organs in East Germany on which Bach is known to have played?) Chapuis is a less reliable technician than Hurford, but he is a delightful performer who takes risks (appropriately brisk tempos occasionally get the better of him) and brings Bach—a secular soul *in flagrante venerati*—very much to life.

Eaten whole, Bach's huge body of works for organ *is* frankly likely to bore or terrify innocent record-buyers. A sensible way to gain access to what can easily seem a forbidding sanctum is to start with Helmut Walcha's fluent, heartwarming recording of the *Orgelbüchlein* (2-Archiv 2708 023, $19.96) and perhaps the late Karl Richter's polished and moving performances of some of the major prelude-and-fugue pieces (Deutsche Grammophon, three separate discs at $9.98 each). ■

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Irving Kolodin

Tennstedt Triumphant

Few recent New York music seasons have seen anything to equal the public and professional accolade bestowed on the German conductor **Klaus Tennstedt** at his first Carnegie Hall appearance with the Philadelphia Orchestra. At the end of Gustav Mahler's First Symphony, the audience was on its feet, cheering a superb performance. Then, the Philadelphia musicians, rather than responding to the conductor's wave to rise and share the applause with him, remained resolutely seated in a rarely rendered "olé" of its own.

Tennstedt is a product of the culture of Leipzig, which goes back to J.S. Bach and forward to the creation of Mahler's symphony in 1887. He was readily recognized as a man of uncommon musical ability when he first appeared in New York with the New York Philharmonic in 1976. But it is only after five years of enduring successes in Hamburg and London (now the center of his European activity) and in Minneapolis (where he is principal guest conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra) that Tennstedt has left behind the restrictions and inhibitions that he brought with him from the East.

Some of the super New York response to a level of performance not heard from the Philadelphians in years, might have been induced by the sight of eight brass players on their feet to blast out the mighty chorale with which the symphony ends. A curio in American concert halls, this gesture is nevertheless true to Mahler's own preferences and practices.

What made the playing even more appropriate were the dozens of other instances of Mahlerian preferences and practices that preceded. Among them were phrases molded into measures and movements, through Tennstedt's uncanny command of the swift tempo accelerations and ritards that Mahler demanded, and the extreme dynamic and tonal definitions that ranged from a muted, doleful double bass solo at the beginning of the third movement ("Huntsman's Funeral") to the pealing brass of the finale. The all-Mahler evening began with the *Kindertotenlieder* ("Songs on the Death of Children"), and it had many similar orchestral distinctions—though baritone Benjamin Luxon's voice lacks the color and warmth to fulfill his keen understanding of the text.

For its part, the New York Philharmonic rose to nearly the same level of excellence a few days later in a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony that brought to an end the month-long guest engagement of **Rafael Kubelik**. His superbly knowledgeable, broadly human objectives stressed such subtle details as the placement of the solo singers (soprano Benita Valente, mezzo Claudine Carlson, tenor Kenneth Riegel, and baritone Paul Plishka) with the chorus where they belong, rather than beside the conductor where they don't, and the latitude granted master hornist Philip Myers in the slow movement to phrase the passages for his instrument in a manner few others can match.

On another evening, Kubelik's superb performance of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony was preceded by a work that was, in a way, a response to a question Tennstedt posed in a recent

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interview: "Is the time of composition completely over?" Kubelik's response was not in words, but in the notes of his own composition, *Orphokin* ("Search"), addressed to the recurrent riddle of the time: Can musical progress be separated from the underlying laws of tones and overtones, as Arnold Schoenberg ventured to contend in his twelve-tone method? In *Orphokin*'s three movements, lasting nearly half an hour, Kubelik presents his own view (as stated in a program note) that the laws of sound are "inextinguishable." His composition mixes "the vertical scale with horizontal measures" in an argument that is always vigorous, sometimes expressive, and directed toward an inescapable objective: a resounding, fully scored C major chord. Some pages would profit from a retouching orchestral hand (as Gustav Mahler, whom Kubelik greatly admires, often applied to his own works).

Between the Mahler and the Beethoven of a crowded musical week, the ever-rising star of Leoš Janáček moved a few degrees higher with the New York City Opera's version of **The Cunning Little Vixen** (seen several years before at the Manhattan School of Music). The production supervised by Frank Corsaro was imaginative, from the conducting of Michael Tilson Thomas in his first local operatic venture, through the scenery and costumes of the incomparable Maurice Sendak.

There was some doubt in my mind to what extent this verbal and dramatic version (in an English translation by Robert T. Jones and Yveta Synek Graff) was a mirror-image of the work first performed in Prague in 1920. But the music spoke for itself, in a surging tide of human vs. animal nature that steadily gained force, from the first expression of fondness on the part of a hunter (beautifully sung by Richard Cross) for a tiny fox (or "vixen").

Animal nature asserts itself when the vixen, dissatisfied with her host, takes to the woods, "marries," and produces innumerable likenesses. The transformations were depicted with fine vocal and dramatic art by Gianna Rolandi, as the vixen (Sharp-Ears), and Nadia Pelle in the unique transvestite role of her mate (Golden-Stripe).

The best of the music comes strongly to the forefront, in Janáček's highly personal, folk-like manner, after the vixen is shot to death. Then the hunter, motivated by the impulse to capture one of Sharp-Ears's offspring, laments his prior errors by resolving, "I'll raise you better, that's for sure!" ■

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SR Competition No. 21

Was it not Gertrude Stein who asked on her deathbed, "What is the answer?" and, hearing no reply, expired with the words, "In that case, what is the question?"? Are we likely, in so short a space, to respond adequately to this encyclopedic enquiry into the human condition? But ought we not to begin somewhere? However modestly? Would you like to send us your answer to one of the following questions? Verse or prose—who cares? But you will be irreverent, silly, amusing, original, and brief, won't you? Twenty-five dollars to the three best? Why not?

1. The Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee? (Numbers 22: 28)

2. Who is Silvia? what is she,
That all our swains commend her?
(Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*)

3. Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
(Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*)

4. Little lamb, who made thee? (Blake)

5. And what is so rare as a day in June? (J.R. Lowell)

6. The great question. . .which I have not been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is "What does a woman want?" (Freud)

7. Baa, baa, black sheep, Have you any wool? (Anon.)

Entries for Competition No. 21 must be received by July 3 and the winners will be announced in the September issue. Send submissions to *SR* Competition No. 21, *Saturday Review*, 150 East 58 Street, New York, New York 10155. All entries become the property of *SR*.

Winners of No. 18

Ronald Reagan was no less first in the hearts of our anagrammatists than in the hearts of his countrymen, but nearly every entry contained the phrase *old age*, which, since at the time of judging we were listening to reports of his blithe indifference to bullets, seems increasingly beside the point. The next most irresistible name was that of Gore Vidal. His magic mix of letters yielded, from among hundreds of submissions, the following: *large void, glove raid, O evil grad!, regal void, a dog liver, rival doge, O vile drag!, I love drag, avid ogler, real vigor, valid ogre, glad vireo,* and *Lord, I gave*.

First prize goes to Marguerite V. Vaughan of Pocono Lake, Pennsylvania, for uniting topicality with wit and gaiety:

Lady Diana Spencer—Yea! D. lands a prince!

Second prize to Patrick Nelson of Lincoln, Nebraska, who turned the single name Oscar Wilde into a seven-line poem of sorts, complete with title, which Wilde himself might have understood better than we do, though he could hardly have admired the ingenuity more:

A WORD SLICE
I, worse clad—
coarse, wild—
I was colder,
I raced slow. . .
A wild score!
Crow, ladies,
I draw close!

We can assure those ladies that however close Oscar might draw, his proximity, even in the flush of victory, could not possibly threaten their virtue.

No entry struck us as deserving third prize, but here are those certainly worth honorable mention:

Helen of Troy—Only of there?
P. Presutti, Niagara Falls, N.Y.
Alec Guinness—Genuine class
F. Jahoda, Los Alamos, N.M.
Edgar Allan Poe—All ape and gore
R. Besch, Marion, Ohio
Dylan Thomas—Malt so handy
J. Bunin, Cincinnati, Ohio
Dean Martin—Damn tin ear
W. Hasenmueller, Prescott, Ariz.
Fay Wray—Fry away!
D. Fornoff, Waco, Tex.
Greta Garbo—Garbage! Rot!
G. Gallo, Glenshaw, Penn.
Craig Claiborne—Big acorn eclair
A. Sweet, Old Saybrook, Conn.
John Keats—Thanks, Joe
F. Costello, Charleston, W. Va.

And if anything could be more incongruous than turning John Keats into *Thanks, Joe*, is it probably what Anon., of Springfield, Virginia, produced out of Mike Wallace: *Clamlike awe*.
To all of you, our sincere *Skanth* and *Duck Gloo!*

Puzzles

Literary Crypt No. 166

EGO SHADWOBOXX YS EGO TYROB H WYKO HX YBWN OCLIWWOQ ZN EGO HBSOPBIW AYBXEIBAN YS EGO TYROB TGY WYKO RO.

ZOPBIPQ XGIT

Wit Twister No. 178

Edited by Arthur Swan

The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash with a blank corresponds to a letter of the word.

The — — — — — — — of all men, a man of mind,
Affrights dictators leery of his kind.
— — — — — — — is fruitless. Once he's free again,
He will, like — — — — — — —, slay them with his pen.

Mrs. George M. McCorkle
West Lafayette, Indiana

Answers next issue

May Answers

Literary Crypt No. 165

The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people.

G.K. Chesterton

Wit Twister No. 177

Bertha, breath, bareth, bather

Middleton Double-Crostic No. 207

(Frank) MacShane: The Life of John O'Hara

He had enough humor to joke about his origins and appearance. Invited to be an usher at a society wedding in Boston, he reported that one of the guests had explained his and his partner's presence by saying, "I believe they're the detectives, here to keep an eye on the wedding gifts."

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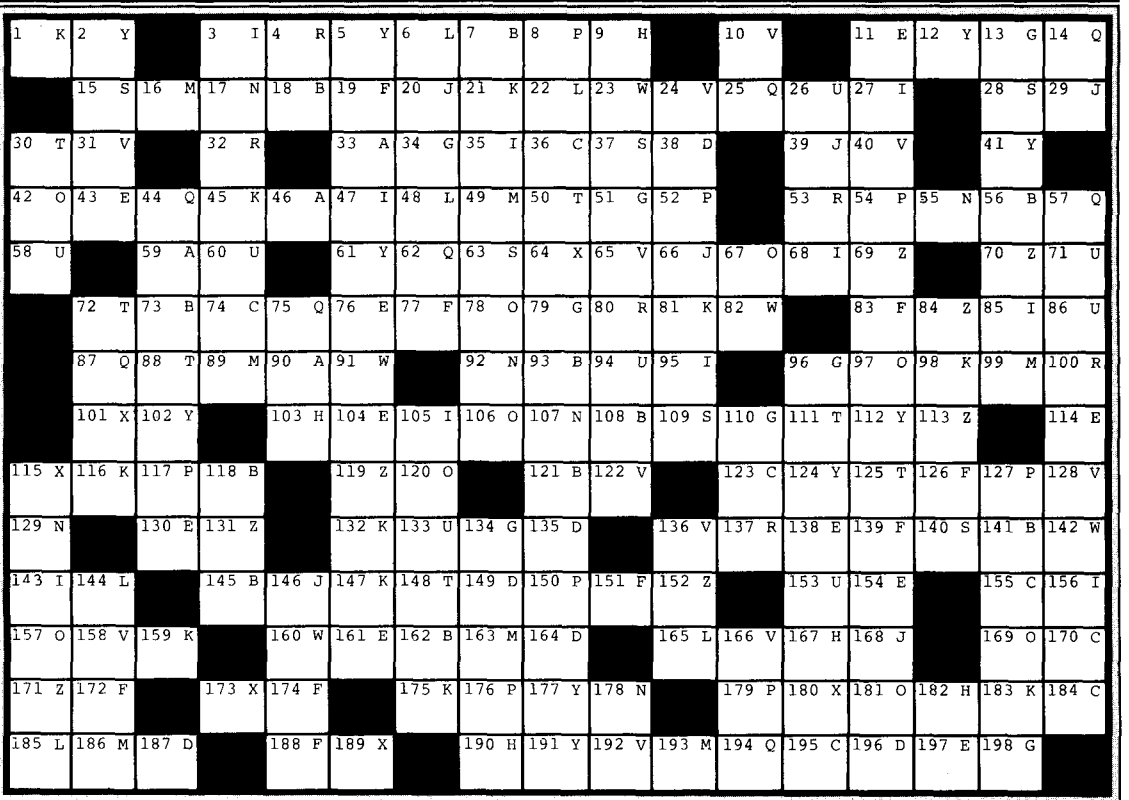
Instructions:
If you've never solved one of these puzzles, it will probably look much more difficult than it actually is. If you can answer only a few of the WORDS correctly, you're on your way to solving the puzzle. Fill in the numbered blanks of all the WORDS you can guess and write the letter of each numbered blank in its correspondingly numbered square in the diagram. The letters printed in the upper-right-hand corners of the squares indicate from what WORD a particular square's letter comes.
The diagram, when filled in, should read as a quotation from a published work. The dark squares are the spaces between words. If there is no dark square at the end of a line, a word may carry over to the line below.
The first letter of each WORD, reading down, will spell the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken.
You should find yourself seeing words and phrases taking form in the diagram; so you can work back and forth, from WORDS to diagram and from diagram to WORDS, until the diagram



Middleton Double-Crostic No. 208

CLUES

A. Fare, provender
33 46 59 90

B. Unbridled; going to extremes
93 121 141 145 7 108 118 162 18 56 73

C. Ruined; went bad
74 155 170 184 195 36 123

D. "All shod with steel, / We ___ along the polished ice" (*Wordsworth*, "The Prelude, Book 1")
135 149 164 187 196 38

E. Forcible entry
43 138 154 11 76 104 114 130 161 197

F. Shake, go-by (comp.)
19 77 126 139 174 188 83 151 172

G. Cheerful readiness
13 51 79 134 34 110 198 96

H. "The ___ are painted with unnumber'd sparks" (*Julius Caesar*)
103 167 182 190 9

I. She is in love with Peter Pan (2 wds.)
27 35 47 68 85 105 3 95 143 156

J. To vacuum, in England
29 39 66 146 168 20

K. Frees from restraint
175 98 147 159 183 1 45 21 81 116 132

L. Frees from restraint
165 185 6 22 144 48

M. Shut in, confined
49 99 16 186 89 193 163

N. Briskly, with agility
178 55 107 17 92 129

O. Wordy, diffuse
169 157 42 78 97 181 67 106 120

P. Assert one's authority in disregard of
150 176 52 117 54 127 179 8

Q. Most humble in condition or nature
194 62 87 14 57 25 44 75

R. Cap. of Haute-Savoie, France
32 80 137 4 53 100

S. English philosopher and physicist (1642–1727; "Opticks")
140 15 28 109 63 37

T. Peanuts
125 111 88 50 30 72 148

U. Deposes from the rank of an ecclesiastic
133 26 60 71 153 58 94 86

V. Overlapping, as of tiles or shingles
158 24 65 40 136 192 10 128 166 122 31

W. Type of muslin
23 160 142 82 91

X. Union general, U.S. Civil War
115 101 173 64 180 189

Y. Torture
12 191 5 102 112 61 124 41 2 177

Z. City in France on the Aisne; battle site in 486, 1918, and 1944
69 70 119 84 113 171 131 152

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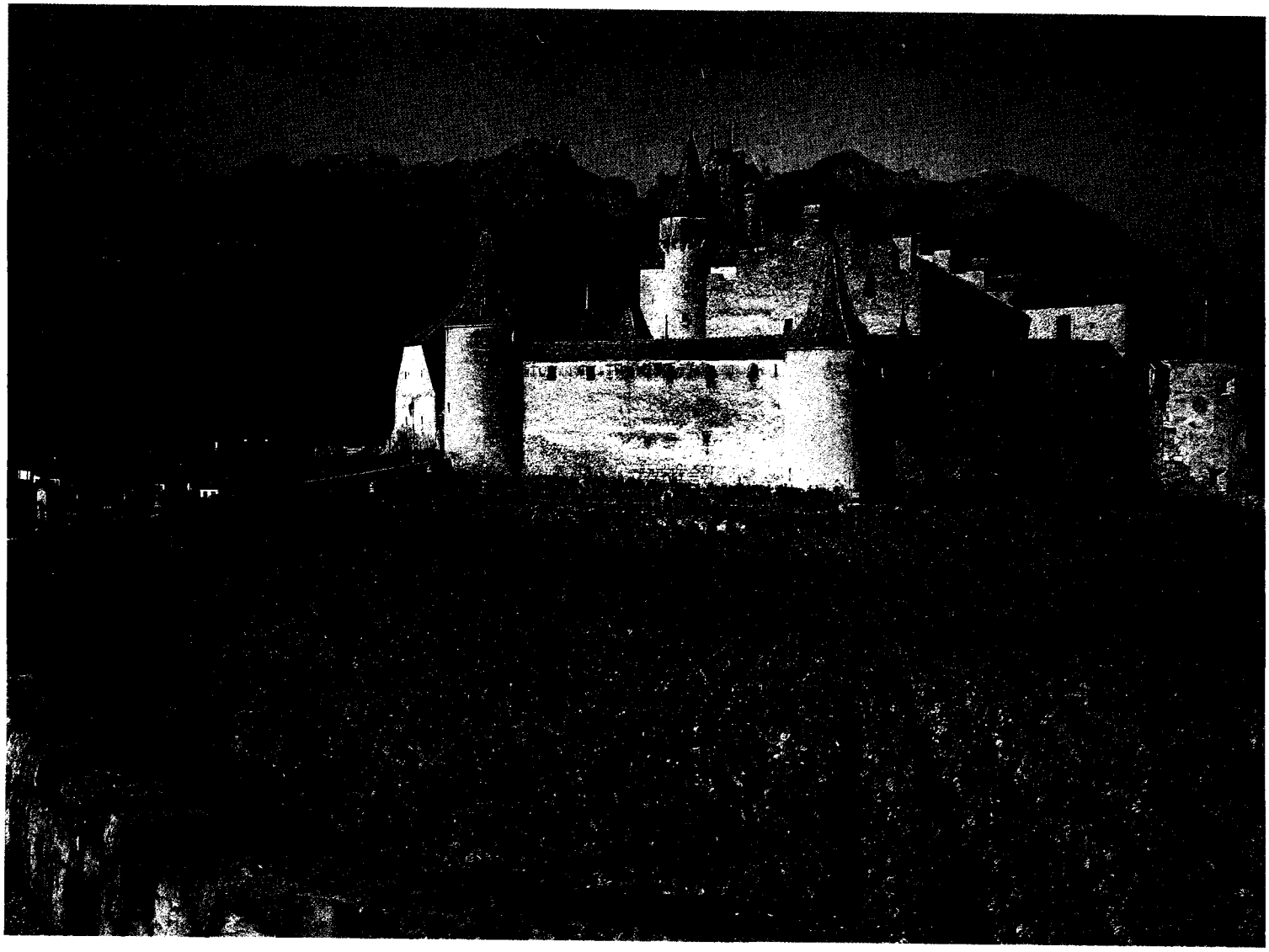

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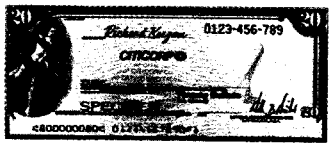

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SR RECOMMENDS

Books

Fiction

July's People, by Nadine Gordimer (The Viking Press, 192 pp., $10.95). A writer who talks about the fears of white South Africans—of black revolution, the destruction of their world, the loss of their possessions. A compelling, convincing parable; Miss Gordimer's best novel yet.

The Shooting Party, by Isabel Colegate (The Viking Press, 216 pp., $11.95). Taking a stately pace through Edwardian England, this novel manages to combine a wealth of detail and an acute sense of living at the end of an era. With the old-fashioned virtues of gentle social comedy, lovingly created characters, and scope, this is a fine, even a distinguished book.

Dad, by William Wharton (Alfred A. Knopf, 416 pp., $12.95). *Dad* is less eccentrically artful than Wharton's earlier *Birdy*, but altogether more powerful in its almost journal-like account of an old man's fight against senility and his son's efforts to save him from the bureaucracy of death.

Storyteller, by Leslie Marmon Silko (Seaver Books, 278 pp., $16.95). Memory and invention are the stuff of these stories by a member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe. Her perceptions are acute, and her style reflects the breadth, the texture, and the morality of her subjects.

The White Hotel, by D.M. Thomas (The Viking Press, 288 pp., $12.95). This extraordinary novel creates Lisa Erdman, a fictitious patient of Sigmund Freud, together with her erotic journal and a convincing analysis by Freud himself—followed by Lisa's later life, death, and apotheosis. That all this is transformed into a vision of hope is the triumph of its author, a poet of astounding talent.

La Presidenta, by Lois Gould (Linden Press/Simon & Schuster, 349 pp., $13.95). A dazzling but sometimes uneven recreation of the Eva Peron legend. Gould eschews the story of the pat political hero to examine the myth-making process itself.

Nonfiction

Twelve Years: An American Boyhood in East Berlin, by Joel Agee (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 324 pp., $14.95). Agee's unpretentious style, his dogged quest for the truth of memory, and the sheer novelty of some of his experiences growing up in East Berlin combine to make this book one of the best recent literary autobiographies.

Extinction: The Causes and Consequences of the Disappearance of Species, by Paul and Anne Ehrlich (Random House, 290 pp., $14.95). These noted biologists and environmental crusaders are hypnotically convincing as they explain why we should be concerned with the snail darter and other species on the verge of extinction.

The Greatest Power on Earth, by Ronald W. Clark (Harper & Row, 352 pp., $13.95). This history of the first years of the nuclear age is an excellent addition to the field—clear, informative, logical, and eminently readable.

The Eagle's Gift, by Carlos Casteneda (Simon & Schuster, 228 pp., $12.95). Phase six in Casteneda's continuing adventures in search of a "Yaqui Way of Knowledge" is not as compelling as previous volumes; still, Casteneda continues to weave his otherworldly magic.

Film

City of Women. Federico Fellini is the carnival ringmaster supreme in this dazzling fantasy of a middle-aged man's world in chaos, with all the traditional concepts of women in turmoil, and male chauvinism attempting a faltering last stand. Once again Marcello Mastroianni is Everyman at bay.

I Sent a Letter to My Love. Simone Signoret, Jean Rochefort, and Delphine Seyrig are impeccable in Moshe Mizrahi's touching film about love-seekers in middle-age, their repressions and concessions and explorations of the facets of true affection.

Portrait of Teresa. This controversial 1979 Cuban film by Pastor Vega offers a universal theme in its suggestion that Castro's "liberation" only frees women to become as enslaved to work as they have traditionally been to family. Daisy Granados is memorable as the woman who finds there are only 24 hours a day in which to be worker, wife, mother, and human being.

SR's Phoenix Code

- Outstanding
- Excellent
- Good
- Notable

Theater

The Pirates of Penzance (Uris Theater, New York City). Director Wilford Leach and music director William Elliott set an overall tone of intelligence and charm. This *Pirates* has been put together by contemporary Americans who love and respect the work but who will not try to mimic Victorian Englishmen or their descendants.

42nd Street (Majestic Theater, New York City). "Hear the beat/of dancing feet," says the title song, and never did a lyric fix a show's essence more neatly. Choreographed by the late Gower Champion on Thirties models, the brisk tappings carry us along on a pleasant tide of nostalgia. The show is just chunks of agreeable stuff that makes us feel things were better back then.

Amadeus (Broadhurst Theater, New York City). Peter Shaffer's saga of the frustration and jealousy in Antonio Salieri (Ian McKellen), the once famous but mediocre Italian-born Viennese composer, over the success and

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genius of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. A potentially fertile idea, reduced with dramatic gimmicks. Even so, the production merits attention for a bumptious and endearing performance by Tim Curry as an irrepressible Mozart.

Sophisticated Ladies (Lunt-Fontanne Theater, New York City). The music of Duke Ellington, togged up with lots of glitz, lots of Cotton Club atmosphere. The show is not complicated—36 numbers in front of a band—but some of the performers are excellent.

Records

Bartók: Concerto for Orchestra and **Deux Images** (Deutsche Grammophon 2531 269, $9.98). Numerous performances of Bartók's works during his centennial year have shown how few interpreters know that clarity and understatement are the keys to Bartók. No intricacy or tenderness is glossed over or exaggerated in Lorin Maazel's reading with the Berlin Philharmonic.

Handel: Admeto (5-EMI 1C 163-30 808/12 Q, $59.90). Ten sides, two countertenors, and stretches of recitative might seem daunting, but the unfailing musicality of every performance here and the ineffable grace of this pastoral opera prove irresistible. Sopranos Rachel Yakar and Jill Gomez sing with spontaneity and warmth. Under Alan Curtis, Il Complesso Barocco plays its old instruments winningly. (Available from German News Co., 220 East 86 St., New York, N.Y. 10028.)

Schumann: Kreisleriana and two **Novelettes** (Peters International PLE 113, $7.98). Pianist Youri Egourov's power and imagination are quite overwhelming. He makes a tremendous, rich sound and proudly explores the "desperate love" Schumann wrote into *Kreisleriana* and the violent fantasy of the eighth *Novelette*.

Sallinen: The Red Line (3-Finlandia FA 102 LP3, $32.94). The Finnish people can be as proud of their new operas as they are of their long struggles for independence and survival in a harsh wilderness. Aulis Sallinen's second opera, performed here in Finnish by the cast of the world premiere (1978), deals with both struggles in bold musical and dramatic gestures. (Available from German News Co., 220 East 86 St., New York, N.Y. 10028.)

60th Anniversary Celebration (CBS Mastersound IM-36692, cassette HMT 36692, $14.95, digital). Zubin Mehta and the New York Philharmonic invited Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman to Isaac Stern's 60th birthday concert and set up CBS's digital mikes. Maybe there are more idiomatic recordings of the Bach double concerto, Vivaldi triple concerto, and Mozart Sinfonia Concertante (K. 364), but these are vigorously virtuosic.

Art

Arshile Gorky, 1904-1948: A Retrospective (Guggenheim Museum, New York City). A major exhibition of paintings and drawings by a founder of the New York School, who has achieved, since his death, the stature of a legend. (Through July 19.)

Philip Guston (Whitney Museum, New York City). A full-scale retrospective of a leading New York School painter who died last year at the age of 68. Guston's late shift to cartoon-like figuration is still controversial. (June 30 through September 13.)

German Masters of the 19th Century: Paintings and Drawings From the Federal Republic of Germany (Metropolitan Museum, New York City). An important selection of artists little known in America. The show reveals connections with English Pre-Raphaelites; there are also affinities with the landscape painting of America's Hudson River School. (Through July 5.)

Old Master Paintings From the Collection of Baron Thyssen-Bornemiza (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas). An old-master collection that lives up to its name. Nearly every painting is of the highest quality. The Northern Renaissance examples are especially notable, and there are major works by many others, including Rembrandt, Watteau, and Goya. (Through June 28.)

Dance

American Ballet Theatre (Metropolitan Opera House). Final two weeks of ABT's spring season at the Met offers performances of the full-length spectacle ballets *Swan Lake*, *Don Quixote*, and *La Bayadère* plus such contemporary classics as Agnes de Mille's *Rodeo* and Jerome Robbins's *Les Noces*. (June 1 through 13.)

New York City Ballet (New York State Theater). The nine-week spring season (ending June 28) is highlighted by a Tchaikovsky Festival presenting a repertory of ballets all set to music by the great Russian composer. This will include new works by George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Jacques d'Amboise, Peter Martins, and John Taras in addition to Tchaikovsky-based ballets already in the troupe's repertory. (June 4 through 14.)

International Dance Film/Videotape Festival and Conference (Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York Public Library at Lincoln Center). A week-long presentation of dance films assembled from world-wide sources, hosted by the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library and co-sponsored by the International Dance Council, the American Division of UNESCO's Conseil International de la Danse. (June 15 through 19.)

Photography

Treasures of the Royal Photographic Society: 1839-1919 (New Orleans Museum of Art). England contends with France for the honor of having invented photography. This exhibition presents the evidence for the English claim and also maps out the directions taken after the early experiments of William Henry Fox Talbot and others. (Through August 31.)

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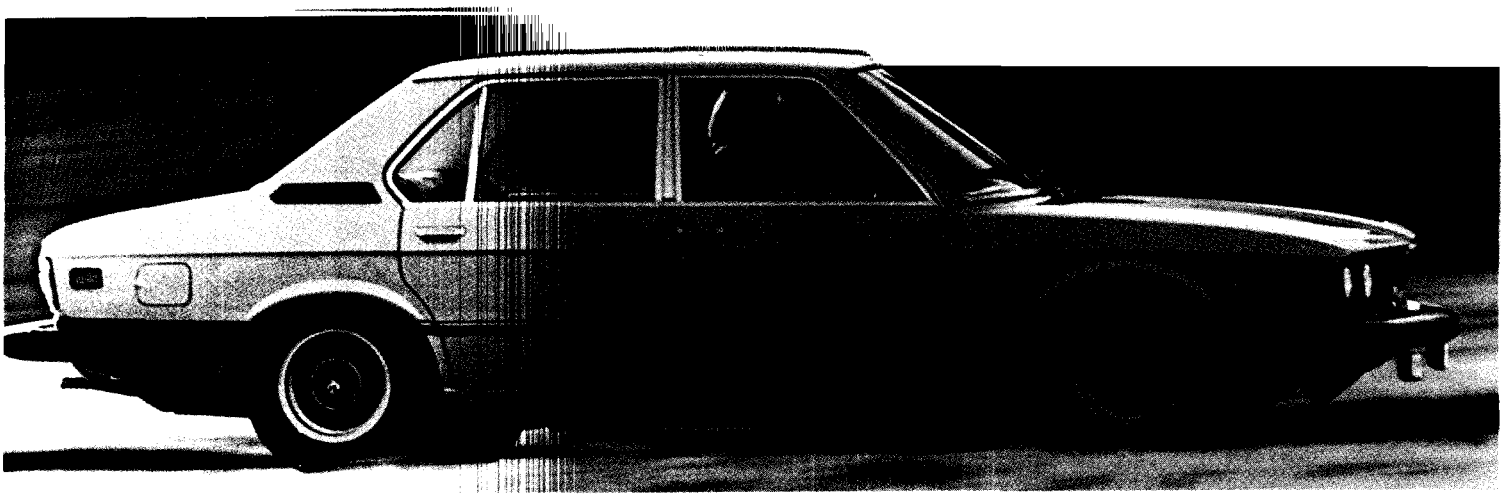

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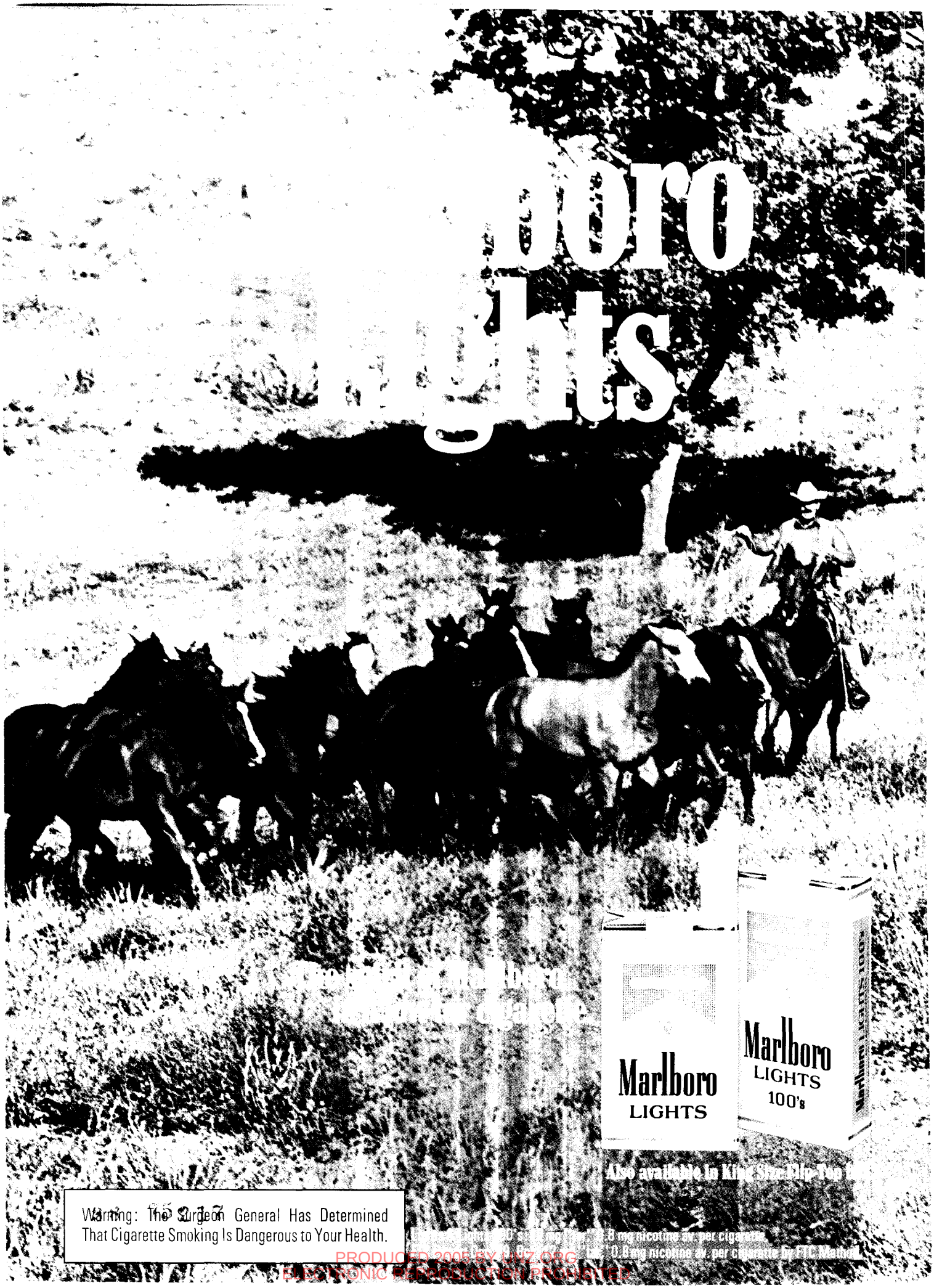

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